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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Elementary Summer School: Culturally Responsive Practices and Academic Outcomes
for English Learner Students in Grades 4–6

by

Laurie Virtusio

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2024

Elementary Summer School: Culturally Responsive Practices and Academic Outcomes
for English Learner Students in Grades 4–6

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by

Laurie Virtusio

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to culturally responsive school leaders who continuously find ways to support their students, staff, and school community. I hope this dissertation motivates you to continue doing the work.

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ABSTRACT

Elementary Summer School: Culturally Responsive Practices and Academic Outcomes for English Learner Students in Grades 4–6

by

Laurie Virtusio

This mixed-method study explored the culturally responsive practices of a midsized, Southern California school district that used Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) state funding to implement a voluntary summer program accessible to TK–6 grade students district-wide. Qualitative data gathered from semistructured interviews with the principal on special assignment (POSA), three upper-grade summer school teachers, and three school outreach liaisons (SOLs) highlighted the culturally responsive practices of the school district to address student and family needs, focusing specifically on English learners (ELs). Quantitative data from the school district examined included the summative test scores for EL students in Grades 4–6. Although EL summer school students did not score significantly higher than EL students who did not attend summer school, the findings demonstrated EL students increased their scaled scores in English language arts (ELA), math, and English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC). A promising finding was the significant change in scores from before to after the summer school program for EL students. Although the study demonstrated funding alone did not address educational inequity as seen in test scores, the qualitative data highlighted

powerful educational practices to help address the needs of students and families. Thus, the culturally responsive design features and practices of the summer school program are an initial start to supporting EL students and shifting the education system toward equity.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

English learners (ELs) are students who enter the educational system from families that speak a language other than English at home. In the Fall of 2020, 4.9 million (or 10%) of all kindergarten through high school (K–12) students enrolled in the United States were designated ELs and the state of California led the country with the largest number of ELs enrolled in elementary and secondary public schools 1,062,300 (California Department of Education [CDE], 2022b). ELs have a complex history in the United States due to inequitable educational access from a language barrier. For example, Lowenhaupt (2014) described how EL students and families have additional difficulties compared to other subgroups when navigating the educational system simply due to language barriers. Additionally, research has shown EL students often score among the lowest groups on standardized tests (California School Dashboard, n.d.-a), and have lower graduation and college attendance rates compared to fluent English and monolingual students (Johnson, 2019). As such, the research has highlighted the inequity in quality educational experiences for ELs compared to non-ELs (Umansky, 2016).

Federal and state laws protect EL students' rights, which are upheld by the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, and the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974. These laws require schools to provide equitable education to all students. For ELs, this requirement translates to schools being required to identify students and offer language support services. To support EL students, the entire system of education must collaborate to ensure EL students reclassify as proficient in English. Both district and school-site personnel

must coordinate to provide greater access to high quality and effective educational experiences, from curriculum and instruction to community outreach and family support.

To complicate the situation for ELs, research has demonstrated summer learning loss disproportionately affects ELs compared to non-ELs, particularly noted in upper elementary grade levels (Perry et al., 2018). Summer learning loss is a phenomenon experienced among all students and refers to declining academic skills when students are not in school. For ELs, research has demonstrated summer learning loss is disproportionate and cumulative, significantly contributing to the achievement gap (McCombs et al., 2011). Before the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020, summer learning loss was well documented and researched (Alexander, 2007; Cooper, 2003; McCombs et al., 2011; Perry et al., 2018). The pandemic amplified the effects of learning loss and equity issues throughout school systems (Simmons, 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, in 2021, California invested \$1.8 billion in the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) as an educational policy earmarked in its education budget (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). The ELOP in California required districts to provide extended in-person learning opportunities, such as summer school, for TK–sixth-grade students. In addition, these programs were required to provide at least 9 hours per day of instructional minutes for an additional 30 days throughout the year. These ELOP programs can run consecutively through a 30-day summer program, or a combination of summer school and programs during spring break. The district in this study implemented a 20-day summer school program.

This historic increase in funding for ELOP to assist programs such as summer school created the potential for supporting EL students in the state of California (State of California

Department of Finance, 2022a). The current study was set against this backdrop and investigated whether EL students in one Southern California district improved test scores after participating in a district-wide summer school program in the summer of 2022. The study also sought to identify the components of the summer school program implemented by the district using the ELOP funding. To situate the study, it is helpful to first understand a brief overview of the legal requirements that require schools and school districts to identify and support ELs. Additionally, it is beneficial to review the educational system context, including the process of classification and reclassification for ELs and state of bilingual education.

The Education System and ELs

School districts must understand their roles in providing EL students with quality education. In fact, school districts are compelled by law to ensure EL students' rights to instruction. Legal cases have highlighted the implications for school districts and teachers regarding their roles and responsibilities. For example, the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974 prohibited discrimination among faculty, staff, and students and required school districts to ensure equal participation in school for all groups. In 1981, a federal court established a three-part test to ensure EL programs met the requirements under the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974. The three-part test was created to determine if a school district's instructional program failed to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by EL students in schools and violated the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* (1974) (Everson & Decker, 2022). Known as the *Castaneda Standard* (*Castaneda v. Pickard*), this three-part mandate for programs that serve language minorities must be:

1. Based on sound educational theory,

2. Implemented effectively with sufficient resources and personnel, and
3. Evaluated to determine whether they are effective in helping students overcome language barriers. (Del Valle, 2003)

The *Castaneda Standard* has important implications for school districts and educators in determining if they meet their legal obligations to English learners (Del Valle, 2003). It is also why EL identification, classification, and reclassification differ from state to state. The law is explicit in its protection of EL educational rights but only sets the minimum requirement.

Identification

For identifying EL students in public schools, all K–12 local educational agencies (LEA) in every state must administer a home language survey at the time of enrollment to determine whether the student or adults in their home speak a language other than English (CDE, 2023e). If a language other than English is provided as an answer to the survey, students take an English language assessment to test their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Parents must report this information on the home language survey. Due to this self-reporting process to trigger a language assessment, English-dominant families may choose to not report other language(s) spoken in the home to avoid testing. No universal language assessment is given to all students to determine eligibility for the EL program (CDE, 2023e). Bailey and Kelly (2013) found the reliance on home language surveys to identify EL students' needs resulted in the under-identification of potential EL students and must be more robust. Kim and Garcia (2014) also found using a single assessment to determine EL designation and program placement creates an over-identification in initial enrollment in the EL program. Thus, the identification of EL students is an insufficient process.

In California, the home language survey and the initial English Language Assessment for California (iELPAC) are the determiners of students placed in the EL program (CDE, 2023e). When a parent fills out a home language survey in a language other than English, they receive a letter that informs them their child will take a language assessment in the first 30 days of school. Parents are allowed to update their home language survey at this time if they do not want their child to take the iELPAC. For this reason, parents play an essential role in identifying their child in the EL program. Once a student takes the iELPAC, parents receive a score report on their child's performance. Students who score in the initial fluent English proficient (IFEP) level do not enter the EL program. However, if a student scores in the intermediate or novice English learner levels, then the student is enrolled in the EL program. A copy of the score report is also sent to the teacher to assist in how to plan instruction for their student.

Classification

After students have taken the English proficiency assessment for identification (CDE, 2023e), they are classified into the EL program and remain in the EL program until they meet reclassification requirements. If students score well on the proficiency assessment, they are classified as IFEP and do not enter the EL program. When students are classified into the EL program, it designates these students as needing additional language supports to meet grade level standards. Schools have a responsibility to ensure these students receive adequate language supports to progress in their English skills and grade level standards. Classification in the EL program has both intended and unintended consequences for EL students. Intended consequences include identification of ELs so they can receive support from their schools, while unintended

consequences include receiving less rigorous instruction that keeps them in the EL program, making it more difficult for them to reclassify out of the program in a timely manner.

The primary role of identifying students in the EL program is to ensure appropriate students have access to needed language instruction to meet grade-level standards. In 1974, in *Lau v. Nichols*, the Supreme Court relied on the Fourteenth Amendment and the *Civil Rights Act* (1964), stating EL students are part of a protected category. By using the *Civil Rights Act* (1964), EL students' right to instruction is also considered protected as a civil right (Everson & Decker, 2022). School districts must ensure students of a particular race, color, or national origin have a right to equal education and have the same opportunities as other students. EL students must meet the same academic standards as non-EL students with language instruction support. Identifying and classifying EL students helps hold schools and teachers accountable for providing language instruction to students to address the academic equity gap between EL students and non-EL students. Once entering the EL program, students are expected to make one make growth in their summative English proficiency test (ELPAC) every year until they qualify to reclassify (CDE, 2022c).

Reclassification

The reclassification process refers to EL students being evaluated to determine if their English language skills advance to the point where they can be considered fluent in English. The process, unfortunately, interferes with students exiting the EL program on time. For example, in California, to reclassify an EL student out of the program and be considered reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP), students must meet four criteria (CDE, 2022d):

- Students must have an overall score of 4 on the summative ELPAC test that measures English language proficiency.
- A teacher evaluation reviews the student’s curricular mastery that aligns with the LEA reclassification policy.
- A parent consultation to present student progress and answer questions about the reclassification process.
- A comparison of student performance in basic skills to English proficient students.

LEAs must set a range of performance in basic skills when establishing criteria for reclassification. In California, Betts et al. (2019) supported the reclassification criteria set forth for by the Los Angeles Unified School and San Diego Unified School District but warned with the rigor of SBAC testing, the districts should monitor appropriate reclassification criteria so that students can reclassify when they are ready. Estrada and Wang (2018) asserted when EL students are not reclassified when they qualify, it prolongs their EL status, and students may become long term English learners (LTEL). Becoming an LTEL has negative consequences for EL students. Thompson (2017) found in the Los Angeles Unified School District, it took an average of 6 years for EL students to reclassify. For students who did not reclassify by Year 6, they were less likely to reclassify out of the program.

Chin (2021) studied the effects of reclassification on student achievement in North Carolina. He found EL students who passed reclassification in third-grade scored much higher in end-of-year reading assessments in fifth grade, and by eighth grade, students scored higher in both reading and math end-of-year assessments. Pope (2016) studied the optimal age and English proficiency to enter and exit the EL program at Los Angeles Unified School District. He found

EL students who reclassified in Grades 2–4 received the most benefit to their English test scores, which continued for the next 7 years. Of the students reclassified, boys gained the most benefit. The study showed no evidence that students received any benefit when reclassifying in later grades. Multiple studies have found the pressing academic need for EL students to reclassify before they become LTEL, making Grades 3–5 highly important for EL students.

LTEL

In California, when students do not reclassify or are in the EL program for 6 or more years, they become LTEL. These students still need to meet reclassification criteria to exit the program; they score at the same or lower English proficiency level for 2 or more consecutive years and are not performing at grade level in English language arts (ELA). LTELs face many issues, such as limited research and research-based recommendations (Artigliere, 2019); overrepresentation in special education (Kim, 2017; Kim & Garcia, 2014); and lack of stability in their educational experiences based on inconsistency across programs, schools, and countries (Menken et al., 2012).

Overall, the process of identification, classification, and reclassification is complex with the potential to not reclassify ELs when they are ready, yielding LTEL status. Yet, school districts are compelled by law to provide quality educational programming for EL students. Thus, supporting EL students is a social justice issue related to access and equity for this subgroup of students.

Bilingual Education

The process of identification, classification, and reclassification of EL students is grounded in the goal of supporting fluency in the English language. Being bilingual—the ability

to speak more than one language—and biliterate—the ability to read and write in two languages with a command of grammar and vocabulary (C. Baker & Wright, 2017)—has many benefits, ranging from cognitive, educational, sociocultural, and economic (CDE, 2022c). Bialystok et al. (2012) examined the mental effects of bilingual people from childhood to adulthood and found bilingualism is associated with a delayed onset of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia and better cognitive performance throughout their lives. In addition, Leonard et al. (2020) stated promoting heritage languages in schools yields numerous benefits, ranging from cognitive and social emotional skills, economic well-being, identity formation, and family and community bond.

With the noted benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy, many have supported student access to bilingual education programs. There are different types of bilingual education programs that include dual-language immersion, transitional bilingual, developmental bilingual, and one-way immersion (CDE, 2022c). These types of bilingual programs can be found throughout California. Dual-language immersion is geared toward both EL and native English speakers with the goal of language proficiency and academic achievement in both languages. Transitional bilingual programs are geared toward EL students and use both home language and English for academic instruction with the goal of language proficiency and academic achievement in English. Students in this type of program usually transition out of instruction of their home language to English-dominant classrooms by third grade.

Developmental bilingual programs are aimed at EL students using English and their home language for academic instruction with the goals of language proficiency and academic achievement in English and their home language. One-way immersion programs target native

English speakers where instruction is provided in English and another language with the goal of language proficiency and academic achievement in English and the other language.

Bialystok (2018) found there is no harm in bilingual education, and evidence has shown bilingual education has many benefits. Bilingual education has been examined in terms of quality and amount of time in the program (Collier & Thomas, 2017). Researchers collected data from 36 school districts across 16 states, for a total of 7.5 million K–12 EL students. They found high-quality, long-term bilingual programs led to more students reading and speaking fluently in both languages. English-only and transitional bilingual programs, however, did not substantially close the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students. Collier and Thomas (2017) also suggested it would take 7–10 years or more for EL students to close the achievement gap in an English-only setting, with many students needing to reach grade level. Overall, Collier and Thomas suggested the time and quality of home language support in school is the best indicator of long-term success for EL students. Unfortunately, there are not enough bilingual programs available for students.

In 2016, California passed Proposition 58, which created a pathway for school districts to access bilingual education (Ballotpedia, 2022a). Proposition 58 allowed school districts to implement multiple programs for ELs that include bilingual education. This measure also required school districts to gather annual feedback from parents and the community. This proposition repealed Proposition 227's English-only programs passed back in 1998 (Ballotpedia, 2022b). Thus, Proposition 58 (2016) was a step forward for increasing resources for ELs, but only applied to ELs in California who resided in a school district that offers multiple pathways (Ballotpedia, 2022a).

Local control in meeting the needs of ELs also means what educators are offering from district to district can vary greatly. There is still more to be done to ensure ELs in all districts have access to quality education, whether it is a district with a large or small population of ELs. School districts with a large population of EL students can more easily prioritize their needs. However, school districts with a small population of EL students may face more of a challenge in prioritizing this vulnerable group of students. It is important for school districts and educators to not only know their role and responsibilities but also leverage this knowledge in improving the programs and outcomes for EL students in their school context.

California also began implementing the State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB; CDE, 2023e). It was a gold seal on the high school diploma or transcript that signified a student attained high levels of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in English and one or more languages. In the 2021–2022 school year, the EL graduation rate was 87.4%, or a total of 512,524 EL students (California School Dashboard, n.d.-b). As seen in Table 1, only 422 of 1,018 school districts participated in the SSB during the 2021–2022 academic year (CDE, 2023e). Of the total seals granted in the 2022 school year, only 50% (or 28,698 students) were granted to current or former EL students.

Table 1

2019–2022 State of Biliteracy: Participating Current or Former English Learners With State Seal of Biliteracy

School year	Participating districts total	Participating schools total	State seal total	Current or former English learners total	% of state seal total
2019–2020	340	1,112	65,622	31,004	47
2020–2021	N/A	N/A	72,506	35,191	49
2021–2022	422	1,242	57,561	28,698	50

Note. Adapted from State Seal of Biliteracy, by California Department of Education, 2023, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp>, copyright 2023 California Department of Education.

Overall, more work at the school district and school level must be done to increase the number of EL students earning the SSB as a way to support EL students, as seen in the data presented in Table 1. Although access and participation in bilingual programs is one way to support ELs, there is not enough access to bilingual education, in part, because of the shortage of bilingual teachers (Hernández & Alfaro, 2020). Thus, school districts must provide additional avenues of support for EL students.

Summer Learning Loss

Summer learning loss describes how students fall academically behind when entering school in the fall due to the summer break. This phenomenon has been described as the trend in test scores being lower in the fall compared to academic achievement during the previous spring. As an example, McCombs et al. (2011) reported students performed on average 1 month behind their scores from the previous spring. This performance created a dynamic where students must catch up when entering the next grade level so summer learning loss can also be cumulative. In other words, repeated occurrence throughout the years resulted in students falling further behind (McCombs et al., 2011).

Summer learning loss has been a prevalent issue, particularly when considering factors that affect educational equity for EL students. The COVID-19 global pandemic complicated matters and highlighted educational inequity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023). During the COVID-19 global pandemic, schools transitioned to distance (i.e., online/remote) learning from the Spring of 2020 to the Spring of 2021. According to Simmons (2020), summer learning loss was amplified during this time and as a result, student populations, especially ELs, experienced heightened educational equity issues. To address this issue, California made significant investments in education for the 2021 Education Budget (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). One of the investments in the budget included the ELOP to help address the pandemic learning loss. ELOP funds were earmarked for programs that extended learning, for instance, through longer school days or summer school programs.

Summer Learning Loss and ELs

Unfortunately, summer learning loss has disproportionately affected specific subgroups of children, including ELs. Summer learning loss refers to declining academic skills when students are not in school, which disproportionately affects low-income students and ELs (Perry et al., 2018). Although this decline has been an issue across educational contexts, it has been noted particularly in upper elementary schools (Perry et al., 2018). McCombs et al. (2011) stated summer learning loss was disproportionate and cumulative and significantly contributed to the achievement gap. This means every summer, students continue to experience summer learning loss. This learning loss is especially true in reading; while students from higher-income families often experience gains, students from low-income families experience reading loss.

Even when high-income students experience learning loss, low-income students face more significant losses. For math, students return to school in the fall, roughly 1 month behind where they performed in the spring (McCombs et al., 2011). According to Cooper et al. (2010), low-income students fell 2.5–3 years behind by the time they were in fifth grade. Meanwhile, the lost opportunities to speak English over the summer significantly impacted growth in English for ELs (J. F. Lawrence, 2012). Thus, summer learning loss is a significant problem in education, particularly affecting low-income and EL students.

Before the COVID-19 global pandemic, summer learning loss was well documented and researched (Alexander, 2007; Cooper, 2003; McCombs et al., 2011; Perry et al., 2018). The transition to distance learning during the pandemic amplified the effects of learning loss and equity issues throughout school systems (Simmons, 2020). For many California students, distance learning started in March 2020. The abrupt shift to distance learning due to the COVID-19 global pandemic created many challenges for students, families, and teachers to foster optimum conditions for academic learning. It demonstrated the importance of in-person instruction for the most vulnerable students, such as low-income and EL students, because students did not have access to school meals, reliable internet, and other services provided by or in schools (Lavadenz et al., 2021).

Distance learning also created challenges for schools who needed a computer device for each student, and many students struggled to find reliable internet and space to engage in online instruction (Simmons, 2020). For EL students, distance learning was challenging because both teachers and students were navigating digital tools for the first time in addition to academic content. As a result, educators were more concerned over student achievement and well-being

for low-income and EL students. Though distance learning was challenging for schools, families, and students, it was also an opportunity for schools to improve systems toward equity (NYC Leadership Academy, 2020).

ELOP

Although the COVID-19 global pandemic amplified educational issues for low-income and EL students, state and district leaders began to identify ways to promote better equity in schools in systematic ways. For example, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2020) outlined six key recommendations to promote more significant equity in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, including meeting students' basic needs, improving remote learning, and extending learning time. School leaders had to address ways to support students from distance learning to in-person instruction. State and district-level leaders also found ways to address the transition in systemic ways to address equity. Against this backdrop, the six recommendations for prioritizing equity in response to the pandemic included:

- Ensuring equity in fiscal policies,
- Meeting students' basic needs,
- Expanding and improving remote learning,
- Easing the high school–to–college transition,
- Extending learning time, and
- Determining students' academic, social, and emotional needs. (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2020)

In 2021, California implemented these recommendations in its education budget (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a) by investing \$1.8 billion in the ELOP as an

educational policy. The ELOP in California required districts to provide extended in-person learning opportunities, such as summer school, for TK–6 grade students. In addition, these programs had to provide at least 9 hours per day of instructional minutes for 30 days during the summer. This historic increase in funding for expanded learning opportunities was just part of the funding allocation under Proposition 98 (1988) (Ballotpedia, 2024). The comprehensive budget also allocated significant funding for universal access to transitional kindergarten. In addition, the new budget supported expanding community school programs to address students’ health, academic, and social-emotional needs. This budget included universal access to high-quality, subsidized school meals for students. Additionally, the budget supported teacher preparation and teacher professional development. The budget would also improve school culture and climate through multitier support systems. It was intended to also address the digital divide by investing in greater student access to the internet and computer technology at school and home. Proponents believed the significant investments in the California budget would help support students and families in multiple ways.

These historic increases to California’s education budget were in response to the economic effects of the pandemic that began in 2019 (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). According to the California Governor’s executive summary for the 2021–2022 K–12 education budget (State of California Department of Finance, 2022b), the historic investment in education helped improve outcomes for California’s young people. It provided children with comprehensive support to ensure they reach their full potential and the future prosperity of California. Expanded learning was just part of its comprehensive support that included:

- universal access to transitional kindergarten,

- statewide expansion of infrastructure to support community schools,
- universal access to subsidized school meals,
- well-prepared and well-supported teachers,
- deeper connections and relationships between students and adults on campus,
- more intervention-focused special education programs,
- improved and more integrated relationships between schools and health care plans to provide school-based services, and
- greater student access to broadband internet and technology in school and at home.

These supports have also helped address the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic. For example, students were distance learning for most of the 2021–2022 school year, and there were significant impacts on students and families and the economy. Implementing these supports altogether was intended to benefit students, families, and the economy. For example, creating a 9-hour day for students meant parents could go to work full time and support the economy. In addition, the pandemic created an impetus for comprehensive support in the budget (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a).

California implemented these recommendations in its 2021 education budget when investing in the ELOP as an educational policy (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). The 2021–2022 state budget approved the ELOP through Proposition 98 (1988) (Ballotpedia, 2024), allocating \$1.8 billion in funds. According to the budget, by the 2025–2026 school year, the budget for ELOP would increase to \$5 billion.

As related to the issue of summer learning loss, the ELOP required LEAs to provide in-person programs for students in TK–6 grade for at least 9 hours per day of instructional minutes,

combined with expanded learning opportunities (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). It also required a school to run an expanded learning program for 30 days during the summer. The student-to-staffing ratio must be 10:1 for Grades TK–K and 20:1 for Grades 1–6. ELOP allowed for flexibility in program allocation through the district. It was funded through a formula rather than a grant process and was based on the number of unduplicated pupil populations of ELs, low-income, and foster youth (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a).

Summer School Programs

Summer school is an opportunity to provide students with expanded learning opportunities to combat summer learning loss. As part of the 2022 California budget investment in ELOP, funding was available for summer school programs, with the hope that such programs would combat both summer learning loss and the pronounced differences highlighted by the COVID-19 global pandemic (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). According to the series of research studies by Augustine et al. (2016), many key components were required to have a quality summer learning program, including individualized and high-quality instruction. For example, Augustine et al. (2016) found smaller class sizes in which teachers could provide more time to work individually with students were associated with program effectiveness. When programs provided students with individualized instruction, students had better academic outcomes.

Augustine et al. (2016) also recommended teachers work with small groups of students. In addition, high-quality instruction was essential and directly related to academic achievement. Teachers need access to professional development. For summer school, hiring practices can give

preference to effective teachers and provide coaching support to optimize instructional quality. Summer curriculum should also align with the school year in two critical ways. First, it must align with the remediation of the previous grade skills students need to master. It should provide practice in core concepts to prepare students for the next grade. Second, the content must align with skills students will need to develop in the upcoming school year by using summer to preview and practice skills they will master in the upcoming year.

It is also vital for quality summer school programming to offer more than just remedial academics (Augustine et al., 2016). Summer school should be a time to accelerate learning and provide enrichment opportunities. Opportunities beyond academics can drive attendance and be more motivating. Finally, summer school participation and attendance are essential to the benefits of an extended school year. However, summer school should support all students rather than just those students mandated due to being at risk of not advancing to the next grade. Creating incentives for participation can be effective in recruiting students into summer programs. These incentives can include parental benefits, bus passes, prizes, field trips, and other enrichment opportunities (Augustine et al., 2016).

Researchers have provided different recommendations about the duration of summer school that may increase achievement outcomes. For example, McLaughlin and Pitcock (2009) recommended a minimum of 80 hours total, while Winship et al. (2005) recommended 360 hours—9 hours a day, 5 days a week—for 8 weeks. Lastly, parent involvement has also been associated with positive achievement for two reasons (Augustine et al., 2016). First, parent involvement creates buy-in that may increase enrollment and attendance. Second, the outreach to

parents can help promote ways to support and increase learning at home. Overall, several components support effective summer school design.

Taken together, summer school is an opportunity to combat summer learning loss and the residual effects caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic, which interfered with students' education and amplified existing educational inequities for vulnerable groups, including ELs. Addressing pandemic learning loss and accelerating student learning opportunities will require multiple short- and long-term strategies. One strategy to help accelerate learning is a significant investment in ELOP, ELOP funds can be used for summer school programming, addressing summer learning loss. Yet, more research is needed to determine the extent to which this funding strategy addresses the needs of ELs.

Statement of the Problem

Students who are ELs are not deficient. Rather, research has documented the many benefits of being bilingual, and as such, the education system is compelled to provide support for students learning English beyond their primary language. Although the California educational system has been building the capacity to better serve EL students through bilingual education (CDE, 2022c), the education system has not been working to support the academic success of ELs, as evident by the lower graduation and college attendance rates compared to fluent English and monolingual students (Johnson, 2019). Overall, the inequity in quality educational experiences for ELs compared to non-ELs has been clear in the research (Umansky, 2016).

Several issues have surrounded and complicated academic success of ELs. To summarize, research has noted home language support in school is the best indicator of long-term success for EL students (Collier & Thomas, 2017). Unfortunately, access to bilingual

programs has been limited in part because of the shortage of bilingual teachers (Hernández & Alfaro, 2020). ELs must also navigate an identification, classification, and reclassification system, which relies on test scores from standardized tests and coordinated efforts across districts and school-site personnel. Unfortunately, due to the amount of work required to implement this classification system, many teachers have formed and held onto negative perceptions of ELs, assuming language differences indicate poor academic skills and an inability to learn and do well in school (Umansky & Dumont, 2021).

Complicating these issues has been the well-documented phenomenon of summer learning loss, which has disproportionately impacted ELs negatively because they experience a compounding net loss over the summer. Research has pointed to the simple example of students' lost opportunity to speak English over the summer as significant impediment for ELs (J. F. Lawrence, 2012). Then, the COVID-19 global pandemic shifted school to remote learning from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021, amplifying and further impacting vulnerable students disproportionately. The pandemic highlighted the preexisting inequities for vulnerable students, including ELs.

In the state of California, the response to these issues included an influx of budgetary funds to support extended learning opportunities (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). Although the funding provides a commitment to expanded learning, such as summer school, research is needed to examine how these programs are designed and whether they are assisting EL students' academic success. Research can also play a powerful role in documenting best practices that can contribute to better academic outcomes for EL students.

Purpose of the Study

The current study investigated one Southern California school district that allotted its ELOP funds to a summer school program. The summer school program took place in a school district in Southern California. The district serves approximately 19,000 TK–12 students. The summer school program was voluntary and not mandated. Thus, students volunteered to participate in the summer school program, which included an option for the recommended 9 hours of instruction. The summer school program provided academic and enrichment activities in three strands: art; physical education; and science, technology, engineering, and math.

Given the disproportionate impact on ELs, this study evaluated academic outcomes for EL students in Grades 4–6 who attended this summer school program. First, the study documented the elements of the summer school program offered at a Southern California school district. Rather than offer a summer school program as an intervention for struggling students, this program was offered to all 22 elementary school sites. Approximately 1,700 students, including EL students, voluntarily signed up for the summer program, which was taught by credentialed teachers who work in the district. The study highlighted the components of the summer school program, the instruction and training for teachers, and the overall intention of this program.

Next, the study attempted to understand whether EL students who attended this summer school program saw academic benefits via improved achievement scores. The study compared the EL students who participated in the summer school program to the average overall achievement among EL students in the district. Finally, the study investigated whether the amount of time spent in summer school positively impacted EL students' summative academic

outcomes. By comparing the academic performance of EL students based on the time spent in summer school, this school district can better evaluate the importance of summer school.

Research Questions

The study began with a descriptive process to document the summer school program offered in the district. Next, the study examined the benefits for EL students, specifically. As such, this research study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the components of a culturally responsive summer school program, offered to the entire elementary school population in a school district? What was the overall intent, the components, and the instructional quality of the program?
2. Does attending this summer school program improve fourth to sixth-grade ELs' academic achievement (e.g., in English language arts, mathematics, and English proficiency summative academic scores) compared to EL students who did not attend this summer school program?
 - a. Does the amount of time spent in the summer school program improve academic outcomes for fourth to sixth-grade EL students?

Method

To answer the research questions, this mixed-method study first used qualitative data from interviews with an administrator, teachers, and staff from the summer school program to understand the expanded learning opportunity offered at the district. Additionally, quantitative institutional achievement data were provided by the district to determine whether attending summer school improved the academic outcomes of EL students in Grades 4–6. This study

focused on EL students who attended this voluntary summer school program, offered in a midsized school district in Southern California.

For this dissertation, the definition of academic achievement was consistent with the California School Dashboard (n.d.-a) created by the CDE (n.d.). This dashboard was an online tool to help different community partners across the state access information on school success from kindergarten to Grade 12. The dashboard measured six areas: academic performance, chronic absenteeism, college/career readiness, EL progress, high school graduation rate, and suspension rate.

Academic performance contained two measures: ELA and mathematics. Both assessments measured student performance on the Smarter Balance Summative Assessment for students without an individualized educational plan. These annual summative assessments were administered to Grades 3–8 and Grade 11. These assessments measured how well students met grade-level ELA and math standards. California adopted Common Core State Standards for ELA and math in 2010, along with 45 other states (CDE, 2023b). The goal of Common Core State Standards (CDE, 2023b) was to standardize what students should learn in each grade level to ensure a quality education for every student, even if they move to a different state.

The English Learner Progress Indicator measured the academic achievement of ELs on the California School Dashboard (n.d.-a). The English Learner Progress Indicator was a percentage that showed current EL students' progress toward English language proficiency through an additional summative assessment called the Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC; CDE, 2023e). This assessment had four domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four domains created two areas of the

assessment—oral language, which consisted of the listening and speaking domains, and written language, which consisted of the reading and writing domains. Finally, the scores from the two areas were combined for an overall score. The overall score range created four performance levels (1–4), and the expectation was for students to progress toward the highest performance level score each year. Ideally, students increase one performance level each year until they reach performance Level 4. A performance level of 4 was one of the requirements to reclassify out of the English Learner Program.

Limitations

Some limitations to note about this study included the use of institutional achievement data for EL students from only one school district in Southern California, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Previous studies have stated addressing learning loss can take years (Hill, 2020), while this study provided only a brief snapshot of data. This study analyzed data in the same school year students attended summer school, so the conclusions drawn from this study are a limited and provide an initial examination of the issue. More research is needed to see if the relationship between student achievement and summer school is consistent.

This study was also delimited to ELs in Grades 4–6 in a particular school district. Selecting these grades was intentional to align with the research noting that summer learning loss has been pronounced in the upper elementary grade levels (Perry et al., 2018). Additionally, if EL students began schooling in the California public school system when they were in kindergarten, students in Grades 4 and 5 were at risk of becoming LTELs. It is important to gather multiple data points on these students to better understand their strengths and needs to

reduce the number of LTEL students. Future research is needed to study the effects of summer school on ELs in different grades.

Significance and Connection to Social Justice

School districts and educators play a significant role in helping EL students become proficient in English to achieve academic success. In California, 200,000 LTELs have been in California public schools for 6 or more years and have yet to be reclassified as English proficient (Californians Together, 2022). An additional 130,000 EL students are at risk of becoming LTELs. Approximately 29% of English learners are LTEL or at risk of becoming LTELs. School districts and educators must address ELs' needs to lower LTEL students' rates and raise student achievement overall.

Furthermore, the rights of EL students are upheld by the Fourteenth Amendment, Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, and the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* of 1974. In California, increased funding from the state means every school district can provide summer school to support ELs. Thus, school districts must understand their roles and responsibilities to uphold EL rights. EL rights usually set a minimum standard for services that must be provided. However, it is up to school districts and educators to leverage this information to fully meet EL students' academic needs and address the issue of lowering the rates of LTEL students and promoting educational equity for EL students. School districts and educators must protect this vulnerable population and shift beyond state and federal compliance to embrace educational equity and address the needs of EL students with importance.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following list includes key terms and definitions that appear throughout the entire document.

Aeries Student Information System (AERIES SIS) is a student information system used to manage, document, and report student data used by over 600 school districts (www.aeries.com; Aeries software, n.d.).

Bilingual Education is an educational model where two languages are used for instruction academic content areas. There are different ways bilingual education can be implemented.

Biliteracy is the ability to read, write, and speak in two languages.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are California adopted educational standards for academic content in ELA and math for grade K–12 (CDE, 2023b).

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is teaching pedagogy that accesses students’ cultural norms, characteristics, and experiences as tools for better classroom instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

English Language Development (ELD): In California, ELD is a set of educational standards that assist LEAs with instruction for students in the EL program (CDE, 2023c). There are two types of ELD instruction: d-ELD and i-ELD. D-ELD is designated ELD instruction where the learning objective is to learn English language skills for at least 30 minutes a day (CDE, 2022a). I-ELD is integrated ELD instruction where the learning objective is academic content that has language supports embedded in the lesson.

English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) is a set of standardized measure assessments for English proficiency given to potential ELs and ELs (CDE, 2022d). A proficient score on the initial test disqualifies students from the English Learner Program. A proficient score on the summative test is part of the requirements for EL students to reclassify out of the English Learner Program. There are two set of ELPAC assessments: iELPAC and sELPAC. The iELPAC is the initial ELPAC assessment taken when students enroll in public school to determine eligibility into the EL program. The sELPAC is the summative ELPAC assessment taken at the end of every school year for students enrolled in the EL program. A score of 4 on the sELPAC is a requirement for students to exit the EL program.

English Learner (EL) is a student whose parent states a language other than English in a home language survey given the first time the student is registered for public school and does not demonstrate English proficiency on the initial English language proficiency assessments for California standardized measure.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is federal legislation passed in 2015.

Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) is a California education policy that allocates funding for schools and requires extended the school day to 9 hours and providing 30 additional instructional days in the school year (CDE, 2023d).

Initial Fluent English Proficient (IFEP) is a student whose parent states a language other than English in a home language survey given the first time a student is registered for public school and does demonstrate English proficiency on the initial English language proficiency assessments for California standardized measure (CDE, 2023e).

Local Educational Agency (LEA) is a local entity involved in education including but not limited to school districts, county offices of education, direct-funded charter schools, and special education local plan area (SELPA; Commission of Teacher Credentialing, 2023).

Long Term English Learner (LTEL) is an EL student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than 6 years and has not met standardized measures.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is a set of standardized assessments that align with the Common Core State Standards (CDE, 2023b) used by several states as a summative, end-of-year assessment for language arts, math, and science for Grades 3–12.

Socioeconomic Status (SES) is the position of an individual or group on the socioeconomic scale, which is determined by a combination of social and economic factors such as income, amount and kind of education, type and prestige of occupation, place of residence, and—in some societies or parts of society—ethnic origin or religious background (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities; manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals; feel and show empathy for others; establish and maintain supportive relationships; and make responsible and caring decisions (Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning, 2023).

State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB) is a gold seal on high school diploma or transcript that signifies that a student attained high levels of proficiency in speaking, reading, writing in English and one or more languages (CDE, 2023f).

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation follows a five-chapter organization. Chapter 1 provided background information for the reader to understand how ELs are a vulnerable student population and how they are identified, classified, and reclassified. Next, Chapter 1 provided an overview of the context in California related to expanded learning opportunities, specifically summer school as a way to address summer learning loss and the residual impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature on ELs and academic achievement, highlighting the impact of quality instruction and teaching through culturally responsive practices. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the method, including the qualitative interviews to address the first research question and the institutional district data to address the second research question. Chapter 4 provides the overall findings after analyzing the data. Chapter 5 discusses future research and implications for practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There was a historic investment in the educational budget for the 2021–2022 academic year in California earmarked for expanded learning opportunities. The influx of funding was intended to provide comprehensive support to ensure all students reach their full potential and contribute to the future prosperity of California. Expanded learning is just one component of this comprehensive support and includes summer school programs. Given the COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated inequities for vulnerable students, and summer learning loss disproportionately affects EL students, summer school programs are considered a possible solution to support EL students.

To address the academic achievement gap of EL students, it was important to review the research-based strategies that support their learning. Although bilingual education has been effective (Collier & Thomas, 2017), students do not have enough access to bilingual education in part because of the shortage of bilingual teachers (Hernández & Alfaro, 2020). Educational policies that support EL student learning also need implementation fidelity. Without the capacity to offer robust bilingual programs, the educational system needs policy alignment and effective instruction for EL students. Teacher instruction plays a key role in policy implementation to safeguard EL students' quality of education.

There are also numerous factors that positively and negatively affect academic achievement for any student. The literature review presented in this chapter highlights how EL academic achievement is affected by factors, often outside of the control of the student, such as student characteristics (i.e., poverty) and behavior (i.e., attendance). Accurately measuring

academic achievement is also difficult. Although academic achievement in this dissertation aligned with the California Department of Education (CDE), research on academic achievement has used different metrics depending on the study's context. A body of research has also argued standardized tests cannot fully capture the knowledge and skills of the learner due to racial bias and questions its validity (Stewart & Haynes, 2015).

Although these factors complicate understanding of academic achievement for ELs, this chapter demonstrates how educational policy is leveraged to promote educational equity and how teachers are essential for enforcing quality instruction to support EL students. This chapter concludes with an explanation of how culturally responsive practices, such as culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), work together to support EL students.

Academic Achievement Factors

Several factors contribute to student academic outcomes. Research has suggested background demographics (e.g., socioeconomic status [SES]) are associated with achievement scores (Liu et al., 2022). Additionally, behaviors such as physical activity and attendance are related to better academic outcomes (Elish et al., 2022; Roby, 2004). These factors contribute to achievement for all students and these effects are seen both internationally and in the state of California.

In an international study comprising two meta-analyses to investigate the relationship between SES and academic achievement, they found a moderate correlation between SES and academic achievement worldwide (Liu et al., 2022). This study found the relationship between SES and academic achievement has strengthened since the 1990s, a higher enrollment ratio and

more extended school day/school year did not affect its relationship, and the relations were consistent or strengthened across grades in concurrent and longitudinal designs. Although Liu et al. (2022) found educational expansion quality factors such as teacher–student ratios, trained teachers, and supportive quality learning environments did not address educational equity, they suggested these factors should remain considerations in educational policy to support inclusive, equitable education.

Academic outcomes based on SES not only align with international studies but also are found in California. Cooper et al. (2010), in a state-wide policy brief, found low-income students fall 2–3 years behind academically by fifth-grade due to summer learning loss. Students from higher-income families experience academic learning loss at a different rate than low-income students and can continue to make academic gains during the school year. Additionally, Dahl and Lochner (2005), using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1998-1994; cited in Dahl & Lochner, 2005), found a \$1,000 increase in family income was associated with a 2.1% and 3.6% of standard deviation increase in children’s math and reading scores. Given many ELs come from low-income backgrounds, the research on the relationship between SES and achievement is important to consider (Sugarman & Geary, 2018).

Another factor contributing to academic achievement among students is physical activity, which has many benefits. However, about 50%–70% of elementary school students in the United States have not reached the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day (Elish et al., 2022). However, there have been many limitations to the existing literature on physical activity and academic achievement, such as small sample size or inconsistent measures of physical activity. These issues may underlie inconsistent conclusions; yet, the relationship

between physical activity and academic achievement suggests either a neutral or small positive association (Elish et al., 2022). The study by Elish et al. (2022) was the most extensive assessment of the association between school-based physical activity and academic achievement in the United States. It concluded physical activity can support children's overall physical, mental, and emotional development even though increasing physical activity does not show it will improve academic performance.

According to Burson and Castelli (2022), students' academic performance, on-task behavior, cognitive skills, and attitudes are components of academic achievement that improve with more physical activity opportunities. Because children's brains require more frequent breaks between instruction compared to adults, physical activity can contribute to academic behaviors like increased attention, time on task, and focus (Bauml et al., 2020; Bleeker et al., 2012; Brez & Sheets, 2017; Lund et al., 2017; Rhea et al., 2016; Stapp & Karr, 2018). In reviewing the literature on the effects of physical activity in school, research has shown physical activity increased positive student behavior in the classroom and on the playground (Barros et al., 2009; Bleeker et al., 2012; Erwin et al., 2019; Fedewa et al., 2021; Fink & Ramstetter, 2018; London et al., 2015; Massey et al., 2017; Parrott & Cohen, 2020; Rhea et al., 2016). Positive school climate has also been associated with physical activity (Bleeker et al., 2012; London et al., 2015; Massey et al., 2017). Finally, some studies have shown a positive correlation between physical activity and research (Byrd, 2007; Dagli, 2012; Dills et al., 2011; Erwin et al., 2019) and math (Dills et al., 2011; Erwin et al., 2019). To that end, physical activity is a variable that can influence academic achievement. Although the current study did not investigate physical

activity, this body of literature highlighted how complicated it is to drill down on any specific variable influencing academic outcomes as it is clear several factors play a role.

Schools with high average attendance have been associated with higher student performance (Roby, 2004). This finding was consistent with research that studied attendance on a student level. For example, Gottfried (2010) found in elementary schools, a student's attendance has predictive capabilities on grades and reading and math subject performance, making attendance a predictor of student achievement. Consequently, Gottfried (2009) also found higher proportions of unexcused absences were associated with lower academic performance, especially in math. For these reasons, it is essential to address chronic absenteeism for all students.

Chronic absenteeism has been defined as missing 10% or more days in an academic school year. For a school year of 180 days, a student missing 18 days or more is considered chronically absent. Applied Survey Research (2011) found students who were not chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade had higher standardized test scores for both English language arts (ELA) and math in third grade. Coelho et al. (2015) found Hispanic and Black students had higher percentages of chronic absenteeism than the general population. They also found low-income students in their study represented 78% of the chronically absent population.

Overall, research has documented several factors related to academic achievement, including SES, physical activity, and attendance. These findings were true for all students and worthy of investigation for EL students. Knowing these aspects contribute positively to academic achievement, programs for students should attempt to encourage attendance and provide enrichment experiences like physical activity, such as the enrichment opportunities available to

EL students in the 9-hour summer program in this study. Moreover, knowing many factors are outside the control of the student (i.e., SES) should encourage school systems and educators to embrace culturally responsive approaches, rather than hold deficit views of ELs and expand accountability measures and gather data points beyond traditional standardized test.

Educational Policy

School districts must provide support for EL students in alignment with the various levels of educational policy, including the national, state, and local level, which interconnect in many ways. The alignment between different policy levels can promote equity for EL students through quality standards, curriculum, teaching, and assessment practices. All policies should be research-based and data-driven.

National, State, and Local Educational Agency Policy

On a national level, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is a federal legislation passed in 2015 that includes changes to better uphold EL student rights (Everson & Decker, 2022). First, it created subgroups of EL students such as EL with disabilities and long-term English learners (LTELs). It also increased monitoring and support. For example, federal EL monitoring moved from Title III to Title I so EL students must be included in state assessments systems and their language progress must be assessed annually. Under Title I (1965), school districts use funds directed at increasing EL academic achievement. Under Title III (2015), school districts must have a standardized process for identifying and exiting EL students. School districts must assess any potential EL student in the first 30 days of enrollment. School districts that access Title I (1965) and Title III (2015) funds must comply with ESSA (2015).

Under ESSA (2015), many historically underserved students, such as EL students, have been included in the four pillars of education opportunity (Cook-Harvey et al., 2016). These pillars include: access to rigorous learning opportunities, multiple equity measures, resource equity, and evidence-based intervention. States that implement these policies with fidelity can contribute to fostering educational equity for students. One way ESSA (2015) supports EL educational equity at the state level can be seen in *California's EL Road Map* (CDE, 2022b), which is part of California policy and gives local educational agency (LEA) guidance toward EL success. LEAs can use the guidance to support access and achievement for EL students.

The *California EL Road Map* had four principles (CDE, 2022b). First, it was asset-oriented and needs-responsive. This means learning builds on linguistic and cultural assets, instruction is responsive, school climate is inclusive and safe, and schools build strong partnerships with families. Second, the road map asserted the need for intellectual quality of instruction and meaningful access for students. Examples of quality of instruction and meaningful access are having high expectations for EL students, scaffolding classroom instruction, and providing instructional materials support intellectual engagement and language development.

Third, the road map advocated for system conditions that support effectiveness, such as school systems providing adequate resources to support EL needs and building capacity to foster systemic EL support. Although these practices look different at all schools, the goal is to have a plan, coordinate and collaborate, and use data to inform instruction. Lastly, alignment and articulation in and across systems is required, which means learning is aligned across grades and systems with a coherent approach to EL learning. Each principle builds the capacity of school

leaders and educators to support students so collaborative efforts are not redundant. Overall, educational policies compel schools and school districts to coordinate to support EL students. A key component of supporting EL students is the quality of instruction provided by teachers, which is found across all four principles.

Designated English Language Development

One example of state-level educational policy designed to support EL students in California is designated English language development (d-ELD; CDE, 2022a). This policy is under the California ELA/English language development framework as part of the regular school day in which EL students get at least 30 minutes a day of specialized instruction based on the ELD standards, students' proficiency level, and students' academic needs. This process is to ensure students can fully participate in academic tasks across all content areas.

Effective d-ELD instruction is constantly evolving for elementary and secondary students (Saunders et al., 2013). This type of instruction focuses on four different areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to develop language development. According to Lavadenz (2010), teachers must have context knowledge to support student language acquisition needs, including: literacy instructional strategies from oral language development to academic language, knowledge of metacognitive and metalinguistic skills, and the culture and history and experiences students bring to learning situations. Leveraging this type of instruction is a critical factor in supporting EL students in school.

Integrated English Language Development

In California, integrated English language development (I-ELD) is under the California ELA/English language development framework as part of the regular school day when EL

students receive language support in content area learning. Whereas the primary focus of d-ELD is language development, I-ELD's primary focus is content knowledge. Duguay et al. (2013) stated with proper support and leveraging EL students' home language, EL students can engage in learning activities aligned with Common Core State Standards (CDE, 2023b). S. Baker et al. (2014) provided four recommendations for I-ELD instruction. First, educators should teach academic vocabulary words with various teaching strategies over several days. Second, educators should give students opportunities to integrate both oral and written activities into content-area teaching. Third, educators should ensure there are structured opportunities to write regularly. Lastly, educators should provide small group instruction for EL students who are struggling.

Educational policies require coordination across schools and training for teachers. The onus is on the teachers to fulfil these educational policies in support of EL students, on top of their daily workload as educators. Thus, teachers are situated in a critical position to support EL students.

Teacher Pedagogy and Instruction

A key element to implementing educational policy in support of EL students is the quality of teaching and instruction. However, research has indicated teacher perceptions of EL students have been negative; they viewed this group of students as having poor of academic skills (Umansky & Dumont, 2021). Deficit thinking by teachers about EL students has been perpetuated by the classification system due to the amount of work required to implement educational policy. In the classroom, teacher deficit perceptions of EL students can lead to fewer opportunities for students to learn, contributing to lower academic outcomes (Umansky &

Dumont, 2021). Although the program is legally responsible for promoting educational equity, teacher perceptions must change to align with its intentions.

Teacher preparation is one way to address negative teacher perceptions and ensure instructional quality for EL students. ELs benefit when general education teachers receive English language training (Education Commission of the States, 2020), especially when pedagogical training connects to core subjects they teach (Bunch, 2013). More than just language training, teachers need training engrained in an asset-based approach with courses that integrate linguistics, first and second language acquisition, culture, and family outreach (Nieto, 2017). Santibañez et al. (2021) researched California teacher induction policy at a program level, along with the experiences of mentors and candidates. In statewide documents, they found minimal explicit references with mostly implicit references to EL-classified students. Mentor and candidate experiences highlighted induction primarily focuses on general classroom practices rather than direct instruction for EL-classified students with no accountability for candidates to demonstrate knowledge and orientations toward EL instruction. These findings may have implications for EL academic achievement. López et al. (2013) reported states that require bilingual/English as a second language certification to teach EL students were associated with gains in EL academic performance. They recommended specialist teachers become certified and mainstream teachers take at least one course to understand language development and ways to scaffold.

Dual-language immersion models of education are another example of quality instruction that can be borrowed when training teachers. Olsen et al. (2020) outlined seven research-based pedagogical practices. The first practice established language allocation and separation of

languages; the second built sociocultural competence. The third and fourth practices included providing literacy instruction in both languages and making cross-language connections, transferring, and metalinguistic understanding. Fifth, programs must promote the choice of language to build a bilingual identity. Sixth, programs must integrate content with language and literacy development and assess students in both languages to inform instruction. If these strategies are implemented, EL students may improve academically. Although intended for dual-language programs, the concepts apply to effective instruction but are limited by bilingual teacher shortages.

Clark-Gareca et al. (2020) created guidelines for schools to better serve LTELs based on the International Network Approach in New York City, where LTEL outcomes yielded higher 4-year graduation rates than public school peers. They recommended:

- starting with academic language and literacy,
- looking at content area performance,
- reviewing student records,
- examining home language and literacy skills to provide opportunities for use, and
- considering student motivation.

Then, schools can administer additional intervention strategies such as providing teachers with professional development to address LTEL academic needs, providing specialized courses to meet LTEL language and literacy needs, engaging in family and community strategies such as parent classes, and engaging in structural strategies such as regular student academic monitoring. Taken together, teachers are situated as a critical lever in transforming educational experiences for EL students but need professional development to counter existing deficit perceptions. One

such paradigm for approaching pedagogy in working with ELs is culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Conceptual Framework

Given the critical role of teachers and instruction, and the need for alignment in schools across teaching and policies, culturally responsive approaches to education provide a foundation for examining supports for EL students. These culturally responsive approaches include culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining practices, and CRSL. Research has highlighted the effectiveness of a culturally responsive approach to teaching and overall school systems to support EL students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

To support EL students, culturally responsive teaching encompasses an asset-based teaching pedagogy. There are three pillars of culturally responsive teaching. According to Ladson-Billings (1995):

- (a) Students must experience academic success;
- (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and
- (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. (p. 160)

These three elements are hallmarks of culturally responsive teaching.

Hsiao (2015) listed the competencies of culturally responsive teaching from literature reviews and experts to create a preparedness scale for teacher preparation programs and preservice teachers; factor analysis identified three main factors for culturally responsive teaching. The first factor was curriculum and instruction. Culturally responsive teaching evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural relevance to students' interests and

instructional needs and uses various assessment techniques to evaluate student performance. The second factor focused on relationships and expectation establishment. This factor focused on parent and family communication with teachers. The third factor was group-prone formation, which focused on creating and maintaining a safe and supportive classroom environment (Hsiao, 2015). Although culturally responsive teaching can entail a variety of factors, it should support a holistic asset-based approach to students' diverse identities.

Although not specific to EL students, in a 3-year study of observing and interviewing successful teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings (1995) initially had difficulty defining culturally responsive teaching solely through observation because teachers had vastly different teaching styles. Ladson-Billings only uncovered the importance of philosophical and ideological values that aligned with culturally responsive teaching after analyzing interviews and a group discussion about their practice. Ladson-Billings's study demonstrated the importance of observing and interviewing teachers in learning how culturally responsive teaching practices can be achieved differently, given the context of their school and students. Teachers who value culturally responsive teaching philosophies and integrate them into classroom actions can positively affect student outcomes.

Teachers have reported strengths and weaknesses in implementing culturally responsive teaching (Cruz et al., 2020; A. Lawrence, 2020; Zorba, 2020). A culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy survey was completed by 245 preservice and in-service teachers showed teachers reported the highest strengths in curriculum and instruction and the lowest in building cultural connections and cultural enrichment domains (Cruz et al., 2020). The highest mean scores demonstrated teachers were more confident implementing culturally responsive teaching around

understanding student preferences, building personal relationships with students, and building trust. The lowest mean scores demonstrated teachers could be more confident in implementing areas that involve specific cultural knowledge and building home-to-school connections. These findings demonstrated a need for preservice teachers to take culturally responsive courses to bring to the field (Thomas et al., 2020; Zorba, 2020). They also highlighted the importance of teachers knowing the cultural contributions of multiple ethnic groups, especially ethnic groups of their students (Gay, 2002). If teachers are confident in building personal relationships with students and need more confidence in acquiring specific cultural knowledge about students, most students may feel uncomfortable discussing their culture and home life at school with their teacher.

Although bilingual education has not yet been accessible to all EL students in California, school districts can leverage national and state policies that support EL student achievement. Teachers play a key role in providing quality instruction for EL students, so supporting teachers to implement national and state policies is important. One type of support may include professional development on culturally responsive teaching practices. Ultimately, the goal is to assist teachers in viewing ELs through an asset-based lens so academic outcomes improve for ELs.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Social Emotional Development

Building trust in classroom settings is part of social emotional learning (SEL) and is especially important for EL students (Lewis et al., 2012; Soland & Sandilos, 2021; West et al., 2018). SEL helps students develop positive relationships and emotional connections to self and others. SEL skills promote one's ability to set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy

for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and understand and manage emotions (CDE, 2023h).

Lewis et al. (2012) examined the relationship between teachers caring for their students and ELs' math self-efficacy and math achievement. This longitudinal study used survey and achievement data from 1,456 California elementary students in the fifth and sixth-grade in two groups—fluent English speakers ($n = 799$) and EL students ($n = 657$). Students completed a questionnaire related to their perception of teacher caring and their self-efficacy in math. This information was examined with students' summative math test scores. The results found teacher caring positively impacted all student self-efficacy in math with a greater impact on EL students with a .1 increase in standard deviation. The study also found a 1.0 standard deviation in math self-efficacy yielded a 1.399 increase in math achievement in both groups of students. Overall, for EL students, the results showed the increase in teacher caring was associated with an increase in student achievement. Thus, the type of relationship a teacher has with a student can influence student self-efficacy and achievement.

Teachers spending time on building relationships and social emotional skills can contribute positively for EL students. Soland and Sandilos (2021) examined the relationship between student self-efficacy and achievement scores. This study compared EL students to non-EL students in a California urban school district with 90% of students identified as low-income Hispanic and more than a third classified as EL students. A cohort of fifth-grade students completed self-efficacy surveys for 4 years and results were compared to their Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth, a computer adaptive reading and math assessment. The results showed EL students had lower self-efficacy than non-EL students and EL self-efficacy

did not increase even when their achievement scores demonstrated accelerated growth. This study highlighted the importance of SEL as a contributing factor to addressing the achievement gap between EL and non-EL students.

Additional research has shown culturally responsive teaching contributes to how brains physically work and influences students' social-emotional state (Hammond, 2015). According to Hammond (2015), the first two layers of the brain play a significant role in identifying and minimizing threats. It also influences how one's nervous system functions to avoid threats, connect with others through things that make people feel good, and attach to others for safety and companionship. Based on these brain facts, the researcher created six principles for how it is related to fostering culturally responsive teaching (Hammond, 2015). Because the brain seeks to minimize threats and maximize connections with others, teachers should familiarize common actions or conditions that make students feel unsafe such as microaggressions. It is also important to create positive relationships to keep students' safety-threat detection system in check because oxytocin triggers the amygdala to stay calm and allows the condition for the prefrontal cortex to focus on higher order thinking. In addition to optimizing brain functioning, culture can guide how students process information. Cultures with strong oral traditions have neural pathways that are geared for learning through story, art, movement, and music. Thus, a culturally responsive approach to teaching works well with how the brain is structured to learn.

Furthermore, West et al. (2018) examined CORE Districts, a set of eight large and diverse California school districts that piloted a system of school accountability that included social emotional skills based on student self-reports. In the 2015–2016 school year, CORE Districts assessed for growth-mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness. The

findings indicated social emotional skills had a strong, statistically significant correlation to academic outcomes (i.e., grade point average and ELA and math scores) and behavioral outcomes (i.e., suspension and absence rates). Implementing and collecting data on SEL can expand school success metrics that support factors that lead to increasing academic and behavioral student outcomes. Teachers play a vital role in ensuring SEL with students especially in the elementary level where students are assigned one teacher for the year.

It is also important that this asset-based lens is extended into the school and not just the classroom. To build capacity to serve all EL students, it is important for all teachers and staff to work together to build a school culture that supports EL students academically but in multifaceted ways that tailors to their needs. Beyond culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining practices further supports EL students more holistically.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is a framework that has evolved from asset pedagogies such as culturally responsive teaching and funds of knowledge (Paris, 2012). Paris (2012) argued asset pedagogies do not fully encompass the language, literacies, and cultural ways of being to the degree that values marginalized student experiences. This concept views culturally responsive as tolerant as opposed to maintaining cultural plurality in a culturally sustaining lens that values social justice. Culturally sustaining pedagogy reimagines teaching and learning away from white, middle-class norms in support of maintaining and sustaining cultural and linguistic dexterity (Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017). Culturally sustaining pedagogy is against standardization of education and is for the continuous evolution of integrating language and culture as it is experienced by young people of color (Paris & Alim, 2014). Unlike asset pedagogies before it,

this approach goes beyond the classroom and specifically integrates cultural and community practices as part of education (Paris & Alim, 2017).

For example, Spycher et al. (2020) engaged in a 2-year researcher–practitioner partnership of introducing culturally sustaining pedagogy to improve the educational experiences and academic outcomes of Hmong American students. They created a 10-day professional learning opportunity for teachers, instructional assistants, school, and district leaders in addition to coaching sessions throughout the 2 years. This study focused on two culturally sustaining principles. First, culturally sustaining pedagogy affirms, expands, and empowers student voice, and second, disciplinary language exploration scaffolds students’ disciplinary thinking, reading, conversations, and writing. Culturally sustaining pedagogy can be demonstrated through classroom activities such as learning about healthy diet from Hmong elders who share traditional agriculture knowledge in community gardening lesson and using culturally relevant books to engage students to relate to main character and write their own stories.

This research–practitioner partnership also highlighted the coordinated effort of teachers, staff, and leadership to actualize culturally sustaining practices in support of EL students beyond increasing positive academic and behavioral outcomes (Spycher et al., 2020). Culturally sustaining pedagogy can empower students in their cultural identities to actively engage in their education by bridging home and school culture. To engage in culturally sustaining practices in and out of the classroom, a vertical alignment of culturally sustaining practices like EL educational policy is necessary. Using CRSL can help school districts implement culturally sustaining practices outside of a research–practitioner partnership. This alignment may also increase EL student outcomes.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

In addition to culturally responsive and sustaining teaching approaches, there are also culturally responsive leadership practices in schools. Khalifa et al. (2016) stated the major challenge in the educational setting is closing the racial achievement gap because current leadership practices have been detrimental to marginalized students. He also offered a CRSL approach to address this challenge. CRSL has four components: self-reflecting on leadership behaviors, developing culturally responsive teachers, promoting culturally responsive school environments, and engaging student and parent context. CRSL aims to demonstrate the possibility of marginalized students having an educational setting and program that meets their social, emotional, and academic needs. This framework is helpful in aligning school efforts toward culturally sustaining practices. School leaders are situated to set priorities, oversee accountability measures, and make key decisions that influence the quality of programs such as summer school that can promote student academic and behavioral outcomes.

The first component of CRSL is important in leveraging culturally sustaining practices because school leaders need a critical awareness of themselves and their students to set cultural responsiveness as a priority. Because culturally sustaining practices are not standardized (Paris & Alim, 2014), it is important that decision makers understand their student population's needs. When school leaders lack understanding, student and family needs can go unmet, compounding educational barriers especially for marginalized groups such as EL students. Critical self-awareness develops a lens for educators to know when status quo practices must be challenged and the ability to evaluate if compliance is at the expense of marginalized student interest.

The second component of CRSL focuses on developing culturally responsive teachers (Paris & Alim, 2014). This component encompasses the importance of supporting teachers in building capacity toward cultural sustaining practices. Because teachers play a central role in EL education, it is important for school leaders to foster a school culture that places importance of meeting student diverse needs.

The third component of CRSL focuses on promoting a culturally responsive school environment (Paris & Alim, 2014). This component begins to extend outside of the classroom environment and focuses on how practices and policies support students and families (e.g., how school leaders can leverage their position in decision making toward culturally responsive practices, how they allocate school resources to meet student and community needs, and how they plan to institute these practices as a system of support that can directly have a positive impact on students and families).

The fourth and final component of CRSL most closely aligns to culturally sustaining practices by engaging students and parents in a community context (Paris & Alim, 2014). Beyond the classroom, school leaders must address the school and community context so efforts of the school community reinforce each other and work together toward common goals. The way in which school leadership are able to elicit rich feedback and have a comprehensive understanding of student and family needs is paramount in upholding CRSL.

In all, alignment of education systems from the national, state, and district level is necessary to facilitate the rights and learning standards of what students are expected to learn. Alignment in schools through CRSL facilitates how best to meet the needs of students to be able

to meet the standards. For EL students, coordination of these systems can strengthen their academic and behavior outcomes.

Conclusion

There are many benefits of bilingualism, and the education system should support EL students' access to quality education to support their cognitive, social-emotional, and academic growth. To provide quality educational opportunities for ELs, schools must be accountable to implementing educational policies that promote educational equity, such as the *California EL Roadmap* (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a).

Although many factors affect academic achievement, to support ELs, literature has pointed to the need for quality instruction by teachers and more time in school. To that end, California significantly increased the 2021–2022 budget for extended learning opportunities (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). Using these funds, one Southern California school district opted to create a district-wide, voluntary summer school program to provide an extended learning opportunity to students. What remains unknown is what the summer school program offered and whether the summer school program improved EL students' academic outcomes. This study sought to address those questions through a mixed-method approach, presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Students who are considered English learners (ELs) speak a language other than English at home. In the 2021–2022 school year, there were approximately 1.128 million EL students in California’s public schools (California Department of Education [CDE], 2023a). These students historically face inequitable access to quality education, a deficit mindset among their teachers, and disproportionately low academic achievement scores. These issues are compounded by an ongoing educational issue that prevents gains in educational equity for ELs: summer learning loss. This is a term used to describe how students fall academically behind when entering school in the fall compared to their academic achievement during the spring due to summer break (McCombs et al., 2011).

Unfortunately, summer learning loss was amplified during the COVID-19 global pandemic when schools transitioned to distance learning beginning in the spring of 2020 and lasting until the spring of 2021. Educational equity issues, including summer learning loss during the COVID-19 global pandemic, were especially heightened for ELs (Simmons, 2020). To compensate for the negative impact of the pandemic, California made significant investments in the 2021–2022 education budget (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). The budget influx was intended to support programs such as summer school to extend educational opportunities and address the issue of summer learning loss.

One school district in Southern California opted to allocate the funding toward a voluntary summer school program. The purpose of this mixed-method study was to highlight the

culturally responsive components, instruction, and overall intention of this summer school program and examine whether the program improved EL student academic outcomes.

Research Questions

The study began with a descriptive process to document the summer school program offered in the district. Next, the study examined the benefits of attending the summer school program for EL students, specifically. As such, this research study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the culturally responsive components of a culturally responsive summer school program, offered to the entire elementary school population in a school district? What was the overall intent, the components, and the instructional quality of the program?
2. Does attending this summer school program improve fourth to sixth-grade ELs' academic achievement (e.g., in English language arts, mathematics, and English proficiency summative academic scores) compared to EL students who did not attend this summer school program?
 - a. Does the amount of time spent in the summer school program improve academic outcomes for fourth to sixth-grade EL students?

Method

Context

This study analyzed institutional data from one midsize Southern California Unified School District that had approximately 19,000 TK–12 students. This school district had 22 elementary schools with 10 of the elementary schools designated Title I schools (1965). Title I

schools (1965) fall under a federal education program, funded through the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015), that supported low-income schools. These were determined by the number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, this school district engaged in distance learning from March 2020 to June 2021 and returned to in-person instruction in the Fall of 2021 for the 2021–2022 academic school year. The school district offered a voluntary summer school program during July of 2022 and prior to the beginning of the 2022–2023 school year. All students enrolled in the 22 elementary schools in the district were invited to attend this voluntary, district-paid summer school program. Families had the option to enroll their child(ren) for a 4-hour morning academic block, a 6-hour program that included the 4-hour academic block plus one enrichment block, or a 9-hour program that included the 4-hour academic block and two enrichment blocks. The summer school program was offered at five elementary school locations in the district and supported approximately 1,800 elementary students. During summer school registration, buses were provided as an option for families living farther away from one of the locations.

This summer school program was not intended to be a remedial program. It was designed with both academic and enrichment blocks. For the academic block, students' schedules had dedicated English language arts (ELA), social emotional learning (SEL), and math time daily. The academic blocks were taught by certificated elementary school teachers. The enrichment blocks consisted of three strands: arts; sports; and science, technology, engineering, and math classes. These classes were led by a combination of certificated teachers and community partners

who provided enrichment activities to elementary-age students. Overall, this summer school was designed to mirror an extended school year with a summer camp component.

Procedures

This mixed-method study (Creswell, 1999) included the following:

- Qualitative interviews of staff and teachers who worked in the 2022 summer school program.
- Institutional records including a school board presentation about the summer school program.
- Quantitative achievement data from the 2022–2023 academic year for EL students who attended the 2022 summer school program and EL students who did not attend summer school.

Qualitative Interviews

To answer the first research question and describe the characteristics of the culturally responsive summer school program, I conducted seven semistructured interviews (see Appendices A–C) with district employees who were employed for summer school. I chose a semistructured interview approach so questions were consistent across interviews with the option to probe participants based on their answers to the questions. The semistructured interview (Saldaña, 2009) protocol focused on the summer school components, instruction and training of teachers, and the overall intent for implementing the summer school program. At the end of the interview, participants had the opportunity make additional comments. The interviews were conducted via Zoom (www.zoom.us) for approximately 45 minutes. The interview was recorded and transcribed through Zoom (www.zoom.us) (Saldaña, 2009).

Public Data

In addition to the qualitative interviews (Saldaña, 2009), I also reviewed public data (~~2022~~) including a publicly available school board presentation about the summer school program that was available on the district's website. This school board presentation was given in Fall 2022 by the Director of Teaching and Learning after the summer school program. In the presentation, they referenced focus groups of parents, students, and staff. The school board presentation further provided data about the experiences of these groups with the summer school program, which provided additional detail to address the first research question.

Quantitative Data

To answer the second research question, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the district superintendent and assistant superintendent to allow access to student information using their AERIES summer school database. The signed memorandum of understanding authorized a data file, allowing for a comparison of EL students in summer school to EL students in the district who did not attend the summer school program. The redacted datafile (i.e., no names were provided) from the district included school information and student demographic information such as gender, parental education, zip code, ethnicity, and grade level. Summer school information was also included to identify the length of time students enrolled in summer school. Finally, ELA and math summative test scores and ELPAC test scores for both 2022 and 2023 were included.

Interview Participants

A small, purposeful, and convenient sample (Saldaña, 2009) of seven district employees who took part in the summer school program was interviewed for the qualitative portion of this

study. One administrator, three teachers, and three school outreach liaisons (SOLs) were invited to participate and were selected based on purposive sampling. They each participated in the summer school program during 2022 and were available to take part in the interviews. All participants for the interviews were adults and, at the time of the interview, descriptive data were gathered to provide a description of their gender, bilingual status, years as an educator, and role in the summer school program. They were all given pseudonyms for the purpose of this study. A description of each participant is provided in the following section.

Hilary was the school administrator who planned and implemented summer school as the principal on special assignment (POSA). She was asked to step out of her principalship at one of the district's Title I elementary schools in 2021 to focus on planning and implementing summer school. She had 30 years of education work experience and had worked with the district for 24 years. She was bilingual and had a doctorate degree in which her research focused on the academic outcomes of elementary EL students.

Brian was a sixth-grade teacher at one of the 10 Title I schools in the district. Teaching was his second career, and he had 8 years of experience as an educator. He was a substitute teacher for the district before becoming a reading intervention teacher and was a general education teacher at the time of the interview. English was his first and only language. During summer school, Brian taught rising sixth-grade students and had the opportunity to meet some of his students in summer school prior to the beginning of the year.

Christina was a fourth-grade teacher at the Title I school with the highest concentration of unduplicated student (i.e., students who were classified as ELs, low-income, and/or foster youth). She had 23 years of experience in education with 11 of those years as a full-time general

education teacher. She started as an instructional assistant before her current fourth-grade teaching position at the time of the interview. She was bilingual in English and Spanish. During summer school, she taught rising fourth-grade students.

Michelle was a support ELA and math teacher at one of the Title I schools in the district. She worked with the district for 12 years—all her educator experience. At her school, she primarily worked with third-grade students. English was her first and only language. During summer school, she taught rising fourth-grade students and had the opportunity to continue working with some of her third-grade students.

Benjamin was a SOL at the district and was in his 2nd year in the position. Prior to being a SOL, he had 4 additional years in education working in the after-school program, as an ELPAC proctor, and as a behavioral interventionist. He was bilingual, noting he was also an EL going through local public schools—his first language was Spanish. He was first-generation Mexican American and was working on his master's degree to become a school counselor.

Paloma was an SOL at the district and had 8 years' experience in her position. She was bilingual in English and Spanish and chose not to disclose further information about her background. Overall, she had 17 years of experience in education.

Diana was an SOL at a district level. Her role was to support multiple sites and the multilingual programs department. She worked in education for 10 years and served as a school outreach liaison for 4 years. She identified a first-generation college educated Hispanic.

Sources of Data

Institutional data, including demographic and academic test scores, were provided by the district for EL students.

Student Demographics

The dataset included a total of 968 EL students in Grades 4–6 (722 did not attend summer school; 246 attended summer school). The EL sample was relatively split in terms of the gender binary with 415 identifying as female and 553 identifying as male. Most of the EL students in the sample ($n = 788$) identified as Hispanic/Latino. The rest of the sample included 65 Asian, 35 white, 10 American Indian, 2 Black, and 1 Pacific Islander (67 were left blank). For the highest level of parent education, 313 students had a parent who was a high school graduate, 289 students had a parent who did not graduate high school, and 158 students had parents who declined to state. Also, 94 students had a parent who was a college graduate, 73 had a parent with some college, and 41 students who had a parent with postgraduate training.

Of EL students who attended summer school, 107 students were in Grade 4, 73 students were in Grade 5, and 66 students were in Grade 6. There were only 30 EL students who attended summer school that did not attend a Title I school during the school year. Most EL students who attended summer school (216 students) attended a Title I school during the school year.

Of EL students who did not attend summer school, 618 students attended Title I schools and 101 students did not attend a Title I school during the school year. Because socioeconomic status played a factor in academic achievement (Liu et al., 2022), it is important to note most of the summer school EL students came from Title I, low-income schools.

Academic Achievement

EL academic achievement was provided by the district and included state summative test scores, or Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) scores, for ELA and mathematics, from the 2021–2022 and the 2022–2023 academic year (Smarter Balanced Consortium, 2022).

The SBAC includes a technical report to provide comprehensive evidence in support of the validity and reliability of the assessments (Smarter Balanced Consortium, 2022). These assessments are scored from Level 1 to Level 4. A score of 4 exceeds grade level standards, a score of 3 meets grade level standards, a score of 2 is approaching grade level standards, and a score of 1 does not meet grade level standards. Students are given a scaled score that falls in a range, corresponding to the level. As seen in the Tables 2 and 3, the levels and corresponding scaled score ranges are provided for ELA and math for each grade level (i.e., 3–6). Third-grade scores are included to show the range for students in the year prior to entering fourth grade.

Table 2

2021–2023 Smarter Balance English Language Arts Scale Score Range for Grades 3–6

Grade	Level 1—Standard not met	Level 2—Standard nearly met	Level 3—Standard met	Level 4—Standard exceeded
3	2115–2366	2367–2431	2432–2489	2490–2650
4	2140–2415	2416–2472	2473–2532	2532–2690
5	2200–2441	2442–2501	2502–2581	2582–2730
6	2230–2456	2457–2530	2531–2617	2618–2770

Note. Adapted from “English Language Arts/Literacy Scale Score Ranges (2020–21 and Forward)–Smarter Balanced English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Scale Score Ranges,” English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments,” California Assessment of Student Progress/English Language Proficiency Assessments for California, 2023, by California Department of Education, <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/ScaleScoreRangesSB>, copyright 2023 by California Department of Education.

Table 3

2021–2023 Smarter Balance Mathematics Scale Score Range for Grades 3–6

Grade	Level 1—Standard not met	Level 2—Standard nearly met	Level 3—Standard met	Level 4—Standard
3	2190–2380	2381–2435	2436–2500	2501–2660
4	2205–2410	2411–2484	2485–2548	2549–2700
5	2220–2454	2455–2527	2528–2578	2579–2740
6	2235–2472	2473–2551	2552–2609	2610–2780

Note. Adapted from “English Language Arts/Literacy Scale Score Ranges (2020–21 and Forward)–Smarter Balanced English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Scale Score Ranges,” English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments,” California Assessment of Student Progress/English Language Proficiency Assessments for California, 2023, by California Department of Education, <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/ScaleScoreRangesSB>, copyright 2023 by California Department of Education.

In addition to math and ELA scores, EL students are also required to take the ELPAC, an English language proficiency test. This test is also scored from 1–4 overall score for listening,

speaking, reading, and writing. An overall score of 4 means a student’s English proficiency is well developed and meets one of the criteria to exit the EL program through reclassification. An overall score of 3 means a student’s English proficiency skill is moderately developed. A score of 2 means somewhat developed, and a score of 1 means beginning to develop. A score ranging from 1–3 means the student will continue in the EL program for the following year. In each level, there is a range of scaled scores. The ELPAC test conducts field testing every year to contribute to reliability and validity. Table 4 provides the range of scaled scores for each proficiency level by grade level (i.e., 3–6) for the ELPAC test in 2021–2023.

Table 4

2021–2023 Summative ELPAC Overall Scale Score Ranges for Grades 3–6

Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
3	1150–1447	1448–1487	1488–1534	1535–1800
4	1150–1458	1459–1498	1499–1548	1549–1800
5	1150–1466	1467–1513	1514–1559	1560–1800
6	1150–1474	1475–1516	1517–1566	1567–1900

Note. Adapted from “Summative English Language Proficiency Assessments, Scale Score Ranges, for California by California Department of Education, 2022e, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/ep/documents/summativescalescores.pdf>, copyright 2022 by California Department of Education.

Analytical Plan

Both the qualitative interview data and the quantitative test scores were analyzed to address the research questions. Taken together, the findings provide a comprehensive analysis of the summer school program and EL student academic outcomes.

Qualitative Interviews. The purpose of this study was to highlight the culturally responsive components, instruction, and intent of a district-run summer school and compare the academic outcomes of EL students in Grades 4–6 who attended the summer program. To answer the first research question, I analyzed the transcripts of the seven interviews using a deductive approach (Saldaña, 2009) with components of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) as

the primary coding scheme. I also reviewed the publicly available school board presentation about the summer school program, noting comments made about the experiences of families and students with the summer school program.

Quantitative Data. To answer the second research question, test scores for EL students who attended the summer school program were compared to EL students in the district via an independent samples *t* test. Dependent variables included SBAC scores in ELA, SBAC scores in mathematics, and overall ELPAC scores. Test scores from the 2022–2023 academic year, following the summer school program, were analyzed.

I then examined trends for EL students who attended summer school. First, a paired samples *t* test examined scores (Creswell, 1999) for the EL students who attended summer school to provide a snapshot of their academic achievement from before the summer school program to after. This paired samples *t* test looked at the dependent variables of ELA, math, and ELPAC scores from 2021–2022 to 2022–2023. To address the research question about time spent in summer school, students who attended summer school were split into two different groups based on their summer school schedules. The first group included students who attended summer school for the 4-hour academic block only. The second group included students who attended the 9-hour academic and enrichment block. An independent samples *t* tests compared the academic scores of students who attended summer school for 4 hours compared to those who attended for 9 hours.

Limitations

This study documented a voluntary summer school program offered by a district to combat summer learning loss and the residual impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic,

especially for EL students. The study was delimited to one district in Southern California and to EL students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. Although the study did not claim causal effects between summer school attendance and achievement scores, the data provided an initial look at test scores from the school year following enrollment in summer school. Previous research has suggested addressing learning loss can take years (Hill, 2020). As such, the snapshot of data from the academic year following the summer school program likely does not provide the complete picture of addressing summer learning loss. Ongoing, longitudinal studies will be necessary to determine trends over time to address summer learning loss. Additionally, research has suggested numerous factors impact academic achievement (Elish et al, 2022; Liu et al, 2022; Roby, 2004). This study did not examine specific aspects of the program (e.g., enrichment, quality instruction, attendance). Still, these analyses provide an initial glimpse into EL student scores.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study attempted to gather and analyze data to feature how a California school district designed a summer school program, that used ELOP funds following distance learning due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. It also sought to compare the academic outcomes of EL students who attended the program compared to those who did not, and drill down on whether the amount of time spent in summer school was beneficial in improving test scores. Despite limitations, because of this study, the school district may learn more about the impact of offering the summer school program for EL students.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Background

The purpose of this study was to explore aspects of a summer school program offered in a Southern California school district, with state funding from the Expanded Learning Opportunity Program (ELOP; State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). The study first engaged in qualitative interviews with district educators to provide a rich description of the summer school program and to identify the culturally responsive components of the program. Next, the study examined the academic outcomes (e.g., test scores) of English learner (EL) students who attended this summer school program compared to EL students in the district who did not attend summer school. This exploratory study aimed to understand how one southern California school district used its ELOP funding via the summer school program to meet the needs of their EL students and their academic outcomes for the 2022–2023 school year.

This chapter is organized in two parts that align with the research questions. There were two research questions:

1. What are the components of a culturally responsive summer school program, offered to the entire elementary school population in a school district? What was the overall intent, the components, and the instructional quality of the program?
2. Does attending this summer school program improve fourth to sixth-grade ELs' academic achievement (e.g., in English language arts, mathematics, and English proficiency summative academic scores) compared to EL students who did not attend this summer school program?

- a. Does the amount of time spent in the summer school program improve academic outcomes for fourth to sixth-grade EL students?

The first section of findings provides an overview of the components of the summer school program, from planning, registration, program implementation, and program evaluation. This section focuses on the qualitative interviews of seven district employees, described in Table 1, who supported the summer school program through registration and implementation. They were asked a variety of questions about the intention, planning, and implementation of the summer school program. These interviews shed light on the culturally responsive components of the program and used a priori codes that aligned with culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) behaviors outlined by Khalifa et al. (2016).

Results from the interviews demonstrated the school district leveraged many culturally responsive strategies to create and implement a summer school program that met the needs of EL students and their families. As a reminder, details about each participant are provided in Chapter 3. See Table 5 for a snapshot of the educators who were interviewed for this study.

Table 5

Participant Profile

Participant	No. of years in education	Job title	Bilingual
Hilary	30	Principal on special assignment	Yes
Brian	8	Teacher	No
Christina	23	Teacher	Yes
Michelle	12	Teacher	No
Benjamin	6	School outreach liaison	Yes
Paloma	17	School outreach liaison	Yes
Diana	10	School outreach liaison	Yes

The second section in this chapter provides the findings from institutional standardized academic data of EL students in Grades 4–6 who attended summer school at the end of the

2021–2022 school year compared to EL students in Grades 4–6 who did not attend summer school. Independent samples *t* tests compared the dependent variables of academic standardized test scores for English language arts (ELA), math, and English proficiency (ELPAC scores) for EL students who attended summer school to EL students who did not attend summer school. Additionally, a dependent or paired samples *t* test examined whether EL students who attended summer school improved their test scores from the year prior (i.e., 2022) to the year after (i.e., 2023) attending summer school. Next, students who attended 4-hour summer school (i.e., academics only) were compared to those who attended 9-hour summer school (i.e., academic and enrichment). These exploratory analyses provided an initial conversation about summer school attendance as it related to academic test scores for EL students and are presented only as an initial look at the data, acknowledging many more variables play a role in a student’s academic performance. As such, findings should not be interpreted as causal, but rather reviewed as an initial look at EL scores in the district.

Prior to analyzing the components of the summer school program, informed by the qualitative interviews and the quantitative analysis, a description of the summer school program is provided. This section attempts to provide the reader with a rich description of the summer school program offered to students in the district to begin to address the first research question.

Research Question 1 Findings

Description of the Summer School Program

The school district that participated in this study used new funding sources from the pandemic called ELOP to amplify its summer school program designed to meet the comprehensive needs of students and families. The program in this study was offered in summer

of 2022. The vision of the 20-day summer program was it was accessible to all students with robust academic and enrichment programming to elicit a high level of student engagement. Parents were able to register for summer school as early as February 2022. It was offered to transitional kindergarten students, who were called rising kindergarteners, to fifth-grade students, called rising sixth-grade students. This study focused on Grade 4–6 EL students because they were at risk of becoming long-term English learners (LTEL). In total, approximately 1,700 students registered and attended the summer school program. The district designated 5 of its 22 elementary schools as summer school sites and offered bussing to all students to make it accessible.

To attract families to attend this free, voluntary, summer school program and as part of the funding requirement under ELOP, the program was designed to have academic courses in the morning and enrichment classes in the afternoon, totaling a 9-hour day. Students could enroll in just the morning academic classes, totaling 4 hours, or enroll in additional classes for a 6-hour or full 9-hour day. Overall, 68 of students enrolled in the 4-hour academic-only portion of summer school, and 155 of students enrolled in the 9-hour full-day option. A guiding principle for every class in the summer school program was social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is an approach that develops positive relationships and emotional connections to self and others through establishing and maintaining positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and understanding and managing emotions (CDE, 2023h). For example, the summer school program had dedicated time in the daily schedule to do a community circle where students learned about each other, discussing how to handle situations with peers and topics such as having a growth mindset. As such, teachers spent time on SEL in math and ELA courses when building academic

stamina and persevering through difficult tasks. In the afternoon enrichment programs, students also had multiple opportunities to practice handling situations with peers such as sharing or collaborating in a group.

District employees were hired to oversee and run the academic program. For example, approximately 43 employees in district were certificated teachers hired to teach rising kindergarten to rising sixth-grade students in ELA, math, and SEL during the summer school program. There were also in district classified instructional assistants and contracted instructional assistants to support students and teachers in the morning and afternoon blocks of instruction.

Community-based enrichment providers were contracted to lead a variety of enrichment classes in three different strands: the arts (e.g., dance and musical theater), sports (e.g., soccer), and STEM (e.g., Lego robotics and coding with Dash bots). This comprehensive program required a dedicated principal on special assignment (POSA) to plan, implement, and execute the program to uphold the district's vision along with meeting funding requirements. According to reviewing school board presentations on elementary summer school, leaders of the summer school program also gathered feedback from students and families. Families were sent surveys, with 612 parents responding to the survey. On a 5-point scale, 89% of parents rated their child's overall experience with a 4 or 5. Also, 86% of parents reported students came home from summer school sharing about their enrichment activities. Students were also given a survey—76% of student reported their overall experience was a 4 or 5 with 82% of students reporting they made three or more new friends at summer school.

The school board presentation also shared academic findings from teacher feedback. In ELA, the summer school curriculum focused on writing tasks. It stated 67% of teachers reported

their students' writing quantity increased over the daily writing assignments. Another finding stated 65% of teachers reported their students' writing quality increased, as measured by the SBAC writing rubric for organization/purpose and evidence/elaboration. Two teacher quotes were also shared that expressed how much growth their students made in writing and how the consistency of daily writing increased student writing stamina, handwriting, and ability to think for themselves. Teachers also shared there is a need for additional training prior to the 1st day of summer school.

In terms of EL students, summer learning loss has been a documented issue that adversely affects this population more than others (J. F. Lawrence, 2012). The COVID-19 global pandemic also widened educational inequities (Simmons, 2020), which led the state of California to invest in public schools and provide more funding to address the multifaceted needs of students and families. Particularly of interest was the summer school program for EL students in the district. There were 246 students who identified as EL and attended the program, and of those, 206 EL students were from Title I schools. Because of the ELOP funding, this school district was able to strengthen its culturally responsive practices to meet students' needs in holistic ways, especially EL students. For example, this district was able to mirror its summer program like a summer camp with the flexibility of having three dismissal times (i.e., the academic-only 4-hour option, or the addition of enrichment afternoon activities up to the 9-hour program). They were also able to coordinate different departments internally in the organization and partner with community-based enrichment providers. They used multiple data points to leverage decision making toward culturally responsive practices. These aspects of the program are highlighted through the analysis of the interview data with summer school educators

including teachers, administrators, and community-based liaisons who were all full-time employees of the school district.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

The a priori codes for analyzing the qualitative interview data specifically included the tenets of CRSL as outlined by Khalifa et al. (2016). The four primary components of this framework comprehensively incorporate culturally responsive teaching and culturally sustaining practices. The four components of CRSL are

- having a critical self-reflection of leadership behaviors,
- developing culturally responsive teachers,
- promoting culturally responsive school environments, and
- engaging students and parent contexts.

These components were evident in the planning, implementation, and student and parent feedback of the summer school program.

Self-Reflection on Leadership Behaviors

Critical consciousness is the basis of self-reflection that entails the examination of personal values, assumptions, and beliefs (Brown, 2004). According to Khalifa et al. (2016), the critical consciousness of educational leaders about culture and race serves as a foundation to establish beliefs that undergird their practice. Leaders who self-reflect on their leadership behaviors engage in equity-minded decision making.

As an example of leadership self-reflection leading to equity-minded decisions, it was evident the summer school POSA, Hilary, knew the district's history and was intentional about how this summer school would be different. Hilary was intentional in committing to making this

2022 summer school program accessible to all elementary school students. Accessibility became the critical foundation for decision making about the summer school program. Hilary shared:

We were given the charge to make this as big as possible so that every student who wanted to go could attend and that we wouldn't have a waiting list because we want to meet the [community's] needs. So, the planning process was a lot of analysis.

Hilary indicated she reflected on the district's past summer school program and the previous year's context of distance and hybrid learning due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, which led to the decision-making process of building capacity for the program. This development ensured all students interested in attending summer school would be able to attend.

Hilary's commitment to focus on the accessibility of summer school came from a reflection on the context of the school's history and guided the planning process. Hilary understood the importance of meeting the needs of students and families. She reflected on those needs and knew data were necessary to truly understand the community. She shared the planning and decision-making process considered many logistical challenges and consisted of analyzing multiple factors that emphasized the accessibility of the program for all students. For example, leaders analyzed how many students at each school in the district were registering in summer school so the district could strategically choose elementary schools nearby to host summer school. They further decided on efficient bus routes to ensure student accessibility.

Critical self-awareness not only includes the reflection of self but also understanding the context of the school community (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). For Hilary, her many years of experience working in the district guided her approach in planning as well. She anticipated parents' and students' needs that ensured no student was turned away for summer school due to registration deadlines. She shared:

It was important for us to stay agile since we tried to have a registration deadline but in reality, that's not how the real-world works. There are families that change their plans last minute or for whatever reason show up on the 1st day of summer school with their child and need to enroll. We knew we had to be flexible and built these considerations in our summer school configurations so that every summer school had space to continue enrollment.

Hilary understood the dynamics of the school community and built capacity for the summer school program to meet the needs of families. Being flexible to allow late registration meant more students were able to attend summer school, especially for families that may have faced barriers to summer school registration. Culturally responsive school leaders understand themselves in the context of their school community to leverage equity-minded decision making in planning and implementing school programs, such as summer school.

Although a separate tenet of culturally responsive leadership focuses on engaging students and parents, leaders must self-reflect to truly understand their assumptions about a community that can drive their decisions. Culturally responsive school leaders value parent and community voices. There are many ways for schools to gain input from parents and the community as a data point for decision making, but leaders must select appropriate methods to truly hear from the community. With the return of in-school instruction during the 2021–2022 school year, Hilary noted there was an emphasis on getting feedback from parents about student needs. She shared:

We had teacher surveys, student focus groups, and family focus groups. They were all really interested in students building friendships. The word friendship came up a lot, so we wanted to not only provide structured academics but social opportunities and enrichment activities that students missed out on.

The feedback from parents, teachers, and students was an important part of how the summer school schedule was planned. According to board presentation, they analyzed feedback from

parents, students, and teachers from the previous year's summer school and focus groups.

Although Khalifa et al. (2016) referenced equity audits for data leaders to collect data, Hilary focused on multiple data points from surveys and focus groups of parents, students, and teachers.

She provided the previous example to show that the decision to include SEL components in the summer school program was based on teacher, student, and family feedback. As the principal, Hilary shared EL would be part of what teachers were expected to teach, unlike previous district-run summer school programs. As such, they designed the summer school program with intentional time for students to connect socially in and out of the academic part of the program. For EL students, this also created more opportunities to practice English in a variety of contexts, not just academic settings. Overall, these examples illustrated how the leader of the summer school program engaged in critical self-reflection, which led to equity-minded decisions that centered accessibility and feedback from the community.

Developing Culturally Responsive Teachers

According to Khalifa et al. (2016), creating leadership teams for cultural responsiveness is a strategy to ensure culturally responsive teaching is constant and ongoing in schools. In this study, the interview data indicated this practice occurred. For the summer school program, a group of instructional leaders, along with teacher leaders, planned the instruction for summer school. The vision for summer school was the lessons were robust and not just focused on intervention or a review of previous material students should have learned earlier in the academic year. Hilary stated:

It required a lot of prep work on the front end to make sure teachers had everything they needed, and kids had everything to participate in a really engaging experience. Our ELD TOSAs [teachers on special assignment] were very involved in the design process so the lesson plans were based on ELD standards like integrated ELD lessons.

Hilary shared the intentionality behind the summer school curriculum, which was made possible due to the culturally responsive leadership teams that included teacher experts. Because all students were invited to summer school, the leaders wanted to identify high leverage skills that were hands-on and engaging. Having English language development (ELD) teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) as part of the design team meant the summer school program could better meet the instructional needs of EL students. In other words, the district did not use the ELA- and math-adopted curriculum of the school year. The instructional design team created a novel study unit with an emphasis on writing for ELA instruction, a math topic for math instruction, and community circle lessons for social emotional learning (SEL). These lessons were on 20 Google slide deck presentations (www.google.com) per grade level for each day of the summer program. The inclusion of teacher specialists in developing this summer school curriculum demonstrated a commitment to culturally responsive practices that honored teacher voice and expertise.

A week before summer school began, all teachers participated in a professional development to learn how to use the instructional slides created for the summer program. The slides were not meant for teachers to blindly follow; rather, slides offered a thematic resource for teachers to use as they saw fit. Teacher Brian stated:

They were clear upfront. We didn't have to do everything in the slides but [we could] do what is most effective with students. With the time constraints and where my students were academically, I was able to slow down when needed, so students could get the most out of it. For rising sixth graders, we got through most of *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) and for math we did a unit on fractions.

Thus, it is clear teacher experts were part of the curricular design and there was a commitment to developing culturally responsive teachers. In the curriculum, there was space for teachers to make choices on behalf of their students' needs. Teacher Brian noted this was his first time

reading *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000) and the whole class really enjoyed the book, including him. He shared there was a class discussion about the traumatic event that happened in the book, which helped students process things in their own lives and see things from a different perspective because of the attitude of the main character. However, Brian also mentioned multiplying and dividing fractions was too advanced for his students, and they needed more practice with multiplication fluency. He felt the autonomy to build in time to practice what the students needed. Overall, it was clear from the interviews that the teachers felt the summer school program offered an engaging curriculum, where teachers were able to modify lessons to meet the instructional needs of their students.

Teachers were forthright about the additional challenges they faced in the summer school program meeting the instructional needs of students. Although the district provided lesson plans for each day of summer school, students were in different places academically and the range of academic levels was very challenging. Rising fourth-grade teacher Michelle stated:

I worked with two different instructional assistants during summer school based on the schedule. One was a district employee who knew how to work with students, so I was able to pull small groups when she was in class. The other instructional assistant was contracted for summer school and did not have as much experience, so I couldn't get as much time to work with students in small groups as I would have liked.

Because summer school was open to all elementary school students in the district, summer school classes were more heterogeneous than the regular school year. To teach effectively, teachers felt they needed more time for small group instruction. Teacher Michelle, for example, noted one of her small groups was dedicated to an EL group where she would frontload vocabulary and offer graphic organizers to help organize their writing. There was an overall sense of wanting more time to do this type of specialized work with students.

Overall, the summer school program provided a culturally responsive novel at each grade level and hands-on experiences for math. These curricular choices reflected the expertise of teachers who were encouraged to tailor their summer school instruction to meet the needs of the students. Teachers shared the summer school design allowed them to focus on adapting lessons to meet the instructional needs of their students. Not only did students benefit from high interest novels but teachers were also exposed to new books. The district spent extra time and resources to create summer school curriculum that benefited both teachers and students and demonstrated a commitment to culturally responsive leadership through the development of teachers.

Promoting Culturally Responsive School Environment

Madhlangobe (2009) stated culturally responsive leaders are intentional about creating an inviting and welcoming environment for students and parents. One way the summer school program in this study created a welcoming environment for students was through teacher placement. All three teachers that were interviewed noted they either continued to work with students they had during the school year or were introduced to students that were going to be in their class in the fall. Teacher Brian stated:

I had some of the fifth graders at our school that were coming into my sixth-grade class. I got to know them a little bit better and that helped because a couple of students were shy, and I got to learn more about them.

The intentional pairing of students with teachers was a culturally responsive practice to promote a positive school culture. Principal Hilary mentioned because summer school was only 20 days, it was important for district staff to be used to where they were most familiar with district systems and students. Assigning teachers to teach summer school where their students would be attending helped create an inviting environment for students attending summer school at a

different school location. This assignment helped create stronger relationships with staff and students.

Another strategy that created a welcoming environment for students was the intentional focus on SEL. The district was intentional about making sure a community circle happened every day of summer school. In a community circle, students could share how they were doing or share facts about themselves. All three teachers noted they all did SEL every day of summer school. Rising fourth-grade teacher Christina expressed support of the SEL lessons by stating:

Students came in and they were able to express themselves and not feel embarrassed, they didn't have the pressure to be right or wrong. They had the space to just express their feelings.

Christina stated students sharing their feelings allowed the class to better connect with each other during SEL, which also extended into their academic risk in parts of the day. She also learned a lot about her students, so her class felt like they created a bond in a short amount of time. Engaging in SEL as part of the curriculum also helped students feel comfortable expressing themselves during academic discussions during the academic block.

According to Hammond (2015), the brain seeks to minimize social threats and maximize opportunities to connect with others in community. The foundation of culturally responsive teaching is building positive relationship with students, which can be achieved with SEL. When students can connect with classmates and teachers, they are more likely to retain information and learn. Teacher Christina shared the benefits of having her summer school students in her class by stating:

When I started teaching fractions during the school year, I had a couple of my students that were in my summer school class who said that remembered the fraction strategies from summer and felt more confident.

In the example, the teacher shared students who were exposed to fractions in summer school felt more comfortable learning about fractions during the school year. Building a supportive community in the classroom is an important strategy that helped students learn socially, academically, and emotionally. This concept also supported culturally responsive teaching. The district intentionally placed an emphasis on SEL for lesson planning that supported students in feeling safe to learn.

Engaging Students and Parents Context

The school district in this study employed school outreach liaisons (SOL) in a full-time, 10-month position. Their primary role was to encourage and coordinate parent education and involvement in various school programs and other activities, perform liaison duties between school and parents, refer families to local agencies or school services as appropriate, and maintain related records. Every Title I school in the district had an assigned SOL to work with parents, students, and staff. Their responsibilities included:

- Promote parent education and involvement in various school programs and other activities, provide information and materials to parents to assist them in using community services and resources, conduct assessment screenings as assigned and refer families to local agencies or school services as appropriate, and maintain related records.
- Perform liaison duties between school, community resources, and agencies and parents at an assigned school site; communicate with parents regarding student performance including attendance, behavior, academic achievement, health, and

- medical problems; and make home visits to acquire information and discuss school-related problems such as absenteeism, illnesses, behavior problems and other matters.
- Unite outside organizations, schools, and families; inform community agencies of available school services; resolve issues or concerns as needed; and contact community businesses to obtain donations of food and equipment as assigned.
 - Facilitate family participation in various activities; identify and encourage recruitment of parent volunteers; explain and assist in determining program eligibility; arrange parent activities including recruitment, training, and scheduling; and monitor parent activities.
 - Participate in student recognition programs for school and community service projects; recommend students receiving awards; and prepare speeches and written materials for distribution as assigned.
 - Conduct and coordinate parent training and associated school committees; arrange training schedule, speakers, meeting sites and presentations; and prepare and distribute promotional related materials.
 - Monitor students with chronic homework problems; confer with parents and teachers regarding students; prepare progress reports; and represent school at site meetings.
 - Communicate with other departments and district staff to coordinate services.
 - Represent assigned site at a variety of school and community meetings and attend and participate in workshops and conferences as assigned.

This position played an important role in connecting parents and students to resources and available support in and out of the school district. It was a requirement for SOL to be bilingual in

Spanish and English to engage families in culturally appropriate ways. They worked with parents on a regular basis and develop strong relationships with families to help them connect to the school.

The SOLs were tasked with supporting summer school registration at their school site during the spring of 2022. Principal Hilary attended their department meetings to discuss summer school and elicited feedback about best practices to get families to register for summer school. They all agreed parents needed support with the registration process and it could be a barrier to summer school for many families. School outreach liaison, Benjamin commented:

Some parents disclosed to me that they are not tech savvy and/or literate so understanding the enrollment process is difficult. They say they step back from asking for opportunities because they are not aware of them. I think it's important to do outreach in their native language and is accessible at school so they can get all the information.

It was not enough to just translate forms for parents. Outreach was important so parents were engaged in the process and feel more connected to the school. The SOLs were a part of the parent registration strategy that made registration accessible and coordinated. Parents were asked to register through a Google Form (www.google.com). Paola stated:

The Google Form was very easy and it gave a list of students who were enrolled so we could focus our efforts with other families. Since registration started early, we were able to coordinate with teachers during parent conferences to encourage parents to register.

Starting registration early helped schools coordinate multiple ways to encourage families to sign up for summer school. After the March parent conferences, teachers also submitted a list of students they felt would benefit from attending summer school to SOL. These teacher referrals were mainly for academics but other factors, such as families in need of childcare and maturity, were also considered. Once they had the list, teachers would reach out to families individually through phone calls. This type of outreach was successful because SOLs knew their families and

could engage families at a higher rate. For example, a SOL who knows a parent's work schedule would also know the best time to call and if they pick their child up from school so they can catch them at dismissal.

Not only did the outreach process help the school understand barriers, but it is also an opportunity to get feedback about how and why parents signed students up for the half- or the full- day program. District SOL Diana stated:

A lot of it had to do with possible childcare because many parents work and most parents only wanted half day until I mentioned that the afternoon is for different enrichment opportunities, then signed their child up for the full day program especially for the upper graders.

Diana also stated parents would bring up transportation as a barrier. To address this issue, the registration included a bus option. Despite offering a full 9-hour day program for all students in rising kindergarten to sixth grade, parents still chose the half day option for their primary grade child. Many parents thought the full-day option was too long of a day. The primary concern among parents regarding their child's academics was reading. Parents indicated they noticed their children struggling with reading since the COVID-19 global pandemic and distance learning. For that reason, many parents chose the half-day option and focused on academics. Yet, the enrichment opportunity motivated upper-grade parents. Students wanted to go to summer school for the afternoon options. Overall, there was appreciation for the flexibility of options so parents could structure their children's summer schedule.

Because SOL worked a 10-month contract just like teachers, they were able to also gain feedback from families in the fall when students returned to school. Parents not only commented about academic improvements, but they also shared an increase in peer relations and interest in different enrichment activities. SOL Benjamin commented:

Parents noticed the benefits of going to summer school academically because they were more academically engaged . . . and that they made more friends. One parent was very thankful that the district offered ESY [extended school year] services for her child in the special education program. She noticed a difference in how he responds to his peers because he was in a general ed classroom.

Overall, SOLs heard from parents that the students had a great time in summer school. They were able to meet students that went to different schools and had multiple opportunities to make new friends while also focusing on academics in the morning and engaged in enrichment activities in the afternoon. Some of the community-based enrichment providers were invited back to do enrichment in the fall, which Benjamin also mentioned made students and families very happy. Parents also shared their children's feedback with SOLs. Diana shared:

During the fall ELAC [English Learner Advisory Committee] meetings, parents said their children really enjoyed summer school and had nothing but great things to say about it because they got to spend time with their friends and do different activities. They weren't just bored at home, and it gave their summer purpose.

She mentioned summer school was a great option for many parents, including those who do not go on extended vacations. Overall, summer school gave their children structure and purpose. Feedback from students also indicated they enjoyed summer school. For students, it was a better alternative than staying at home. It helped create a positive environment at school when parents knew their children wanted to be at school because it offered more than just academics. The SOLs helped families recognize school provides different types of options and resources.

SOLs also play an important role in helping parents navigate the school system. SOLs build relationships with parents and have access to student information. They can better support parents in being an advocate for their children. SOL Paola stated:

There are parents that don't even realize that their child is an English Learner, they get invited to ELAC meetings and don't understand why. I talk to them about the difference

between conversational and academic English and how their child is required to take the ELPAC test until they reclassify.

The SOLs engaged with parents on a regular basis and prioritize the time to explain to parents the process of the EL program. It has been well known in the district that not many parents attend ELAC meetings even when they are conveniently scheduled before or after school events, like the weekly school assemblies that are usually well attended. Part of what makes SOL so effective is they are part of the school district and the school community. Even if parents miss a meeting, SOL can outreach to parents directly and be targeted with their approach. They play an important role in parent and community outreach to help gather essential data that provide the district with multiple data points to leverage their decision making in meeting student, parent, and community needs and ultimately upholding a culturally responsive approach to school leadership.

Research Question 1 Conclusion

The first research question in this study sought to identify the components of a culturally responsive summer school program and offered to the entire elementary school population in a school district. Additionally, the study intended to discover the overall intent, components, and instructional quality of the program. Based on the analysis of interview data from employees, this school district used multiple strategies to amplify their summer school program using ELOP funding. With the added funding, the district was able to implement a vision for summer school that was robust and accessible.

First, they dedicated a POSA to plan, implement, and execute the summer program. She coordinated multiple internal departments to ensure the summer program was accessible to all elementary school students through bussing and a flexible dismissal schedule. She used multiple

data points from students, teachers, and parent focus groups to guide planning of the program. This process resulted in creating an instructional leadership team that created a curriculum that included SEL, high-interest and culturally responsive book selections for ELA instruction, and hands-on instruction for math. With ELD TOSA on the instructional team, the ELA instruction incorporated integrated ELD instruction strategies. They were intentional about the quality and rigor of instruction and did not rely on purchasing commercial instructional materials to meet the instructional need of their students.

Second, the intentional curriculum planning led to promoting culturally responsive teachers. Because teachers already had culturally responsive lessons, they could focus on attending to learning more about their students through the SEL lessons and building a safe, culturally responsive learning environment to adapt the lessons to meet the specific needs of the students in their class. All the teachers interviewed were placed in summer programs where they had their students from the previous year or would have some of their students in the fall. This learning environment helped students make friends and have a positive experience in summer school, helping them retain information they learned or were introduced into the next school year.

Last, early planning allowed the POSA to collaborate and coordinate strategies with SOLs to register as many students as possible and target groups of students such as EL students that would benefit most from attending the program. It also allowed them to leverage parent conferences in March for teachers to explicitly talk to parents about the benefits of attending summer schools. SOLs were also able to follow up with parents so summer school registration would not be a barrier. The role of the SOL was also integral in helping parents' access,

understanding, and reflection on the benefits of the summer program. They played an important role in helping families feel connected to the school and access a wide array of resources and information in and out of the district.

The CRSL framework highlighted how this school district can deepen their culturally responsive practices as a comprehensive system to meet the needs of students and families. The district designed, implemented, and executed a culturally responsive summer school program through coordinated efforts in the organization guided by district vision and leadership. It promoted culturally responsive teaching through district-created curriculum and used culturally sustaining practices through the outreach work of SOLs to ensure accessible and robust programming. Parent and student feedback demonstrated students enjoyed summer school because they were able to socialize with peers and engage in enrichment activities.

Research Question 2 Findings

The second research question sought to explore whether attending this summer school program improved fourth to sixth-grade ELs' academic achievement (e.g., in ELA, mathematics, and English proficiency summative academic scores).

Academic Outcomes of Grades 4–6 EL Students

Three sets of analyses attempted to answer this research question. First, I compared EL students who attended summer school to EL students in the same district who did not attend this summer school program. Then, I looked only at the EL students who attended summer school to see if their scores changed from 2022 to 2023 (i.e., before to after summer school) and if there were differences in scores based on time spent in summer school (i.e., 4 or 9 hours). These analyses were preliminary and provided an initial review of academic outcomes of upper grade

EL students, knowing many more variables contribute to academic performance of students (Cooper et al., 2010; Elish et al., 2022; Gottfried, 2009, 2010; Roby, 2004), especially in the context of returning to in-person instruction after the COVID-19 global pandemic. It is expected that it will take years to address academics for all students due to distance learning (Hill, 2020).

Academic achievement scores were measured by California summative state test for ELA, mathematics, and ELPAC (California School Dashboard, n.d.-b). Scaled scores were used as a measure of analysis and a range of scaled scores correspond to proficiency level score of 1–4. For ELA and math, a score of 4 exceeds grade level standards, a score of 3 meets grade level standards, a score of 2 is approaching grade level standards, and a score of 1 does not meet grade level standards. For ELPAC, scores also range from 1–4 and a student must receive a scale score in the Level 4 range to reclassify out of the program.

The scaled scores were analyzed for each grade level using independent samples *t* tests that showed the mean scores on these tests for EL students who attended summer school compared to EL students who did not attend summer school. See Tables 2, 3, and 4 for the ranges of scaled scores that correspond to the Levels 1–4 for ELA, math, and ELPAC. Keeping these ranges in mind is helpful when interpreting the scores provided.

Summer School Versus No Summer School

The academic scores of EL summer school students compared to EL students who did not attend summer school are presented in Table 6. The table displays the ELA, math, and ELPAC scores by grade level for students who attended summer school compared to students who did not go to summer school. A total of 246 EL students attended summer school and 722 EL students did not attend summer school in Grades 4–6. In total, there are 968 EL students in

Grade 4–6 with approximately 300 students per grade level.

Table 6

Independent Samples t Test Comparing EL Students in Summer School to No Summer School

Grade	Dependent variables	Summer school			No summer school		
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Grade 4	ELA	101	2401.09	83.56	238	2405.71	84.40
	Math	100	2419.21	82.35	238	2427.69	76.26
	ELPAC	80	1522.38	46.11	217	1513.41	62.93
Grade 5	ELA	69	2428.93	84.01	215	2417.91	79.40
	Math	69	2431.67	86.74	215	2411.66	79.27
	ELPAC	54	1531.85	51.07	199	1526.01	59.43
Grade 6	ELA	65	2462.78	80.88	221	2450.50	78.80
	Math	65	2446.23	86.11	222	2424.72	90.14
	ELPAC	55	1548.20	47.67*	194	1529.71	56.70

Note. *statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 6 compares two independent groups: EL students who attended summer school to EL students in the same district who did not attend summer school. The three dependent variables are the scaled scores in ELA, math, and ELPAC. These scores represent EL students’ academic achievement in 2023, after the summer school program was offered in the summer of 2022. The following findings are presented by dependent variable.

ELPAC. In Table 6, the mean scores indicate across the grade levels, and for all EL students in the district (who attended summer school or not), all ELPAC scale scores ranged in the Level 3 proficiency level: Grade 4 (1499–1548), Grade 5 (1514–1559), and Grade 6 (1517–1566). Only the sixth-grade ELPAC scores were statistically significant, $t(247) = 2.21, p < .05$. EL students who attended summer school scored significantly higher ($M = 1548.20, SD = 47.67$) than EL students who did not attend summer school ($M = 1529.71, SD = 56.70$). These mean scores for the sixth-grade students on the ELPAC assessment corresponded to a Level 3 proficiency (i.e., range: 1517–1566), which means they were not yet able to reclassify out of the EL program. This is important to note because EL students who are not at a Level 4 by fifth-

grade and do not meet other requirements will be unable to reclassify and are considered LTELs in sixth grade.

ELA and Math. Although ELPAC scores were only significantly different for sixth graders, the ELA and math scaled score comparisons showed no statistical differences for students in fourth, fifth, or sixth grade. Looking at the mean scores, EL students who attended summer school had slightly higher scale scores for ELA and math in Grade 5 and 6. In Grade 4, EL students who did not attend summer school had slightly higher mean scores in ELA and math. These mean scores were then converted to the 1–4 scale indicating standard *not met* (1), *nearly met* (2), *met* (3), and *exceeded* (4). Apart from Grade 6 ELA, all scaled scores were in the same proficient range. For Grade 6 ELA scores, the summer school student group average of 2462.78 indicated a scale score range of *standard nearly met* (i.e., range: 2457–2530) with an overall score of 2, compared to students who did not attend summer school who fell in the *standard not met* range (i.e., range: 2210–2456) with a group average of 2450, corresponding to an overall score of 1. Overall, the data revealed no EL group *met* or *exceeded* the standard in ELA or math.

EL Summative Test Scores—Before and After Summer School

Table 7 compares EL summer school students' academic test scores from 2022 to 2023, using a paired, or dependent samples, *t* test. For example, the 2022 scale scores for the fourth-grade group were their summative test scores in Grade 3 prior to attending summer school, and the 2023 scores were their summative scores for their current year after having attended 20 additional days of summer school. Paired *t* tests were analyzed by grade level and shown in Table 7.

Table 7*Paired Samples t Test Comparing 2022 to 2023 Test Scores for EL Students in Summer School*

Grade	Dependent variables	n	2022		2023	
			M	SD	M	SD
Grade 4	ELA	96	2367.10	80.75	2404.17	80.88***
	Math	98	2385.87	67.86	2418.11	82.72***
	ELPAC	80	1483.73	33.69	1522.38	46.11***
Grade 5	ELA	67	2390.88	88.38	2428.43	84.88***
	Math	69	2417.54	78.49	2431.67	86.74*
	ELPAC	54	1503.13	68.45	1531.85	51.07***
Grade 6	ELA	65	2415.89	70.69	2462.78	80.88***
	Math	65	2419.68	70.69	2446.23	86.11***
	ELPAC	55	1523.89	39.11	1548.20	47.67***

Note. * significant at the $p < .05$; *** significant at the $p < .001$.

As seen in Table 7, EL students who attended summer school saw significant improvement in their test scores, which increased from 2022 to 2023 (from one grade level to the next). In fact, from 2022 to 2023, across the dependent variables, all paired sample t tests showed statistically significant improvement in ELA, math, and ELPAC scores (California School Dashboard, n.d.-b) for EL students who attended summer school. However, although their scores significantly increased, they remained in the same proficiency level (see Tables 2–4), except for fourth-grade ELPAC scores and sixth-grade ELA scores, which went up one proficiency level. The ELA scores for fourth-grade students went down from a Level 2 proficiency in 2022 to a Level 1 in 2023. The math scores for fifth-grade students also went down from a Level 2 proficiency in 2022 to a Level 1 in 2023.

ELPAC. In regard to ELPAC scores, EL students in the fourth-grade significantly improved from before to after summer school, $t(79) = 8.73, p < .001$. The average of 1483.73 in 2022 (or Level 2 proficiency) increased to 1522.38 in 2023 (or Level 3 proficiency). From before to after summer school, fifth-grade EL students' mean scores on the ELPAC significantly improved from 1483.73 (or Level 2 proficiency) to 1522.38 (or Level 3 proficiency), $t(53) =$

3.93, $p < .001$. For sixth-grade EL students, mean scores significantly improved from 1523.89 to 1548.20, with these students staying in proficiency Level 3, $t(54) = 3.93, p < .001$.

ELA and Math. Both ELA and math scores from 2022 to 2023 indicated EL students demonstrated statistically significant improvement from before to after summer school based on their mean scores, but this did not always correspond to improvement in their proficiency levels. Although promising to see statistically significant improvement, apart from sixth grade, the mean scores from 2022 to 2023 remained at the Level 1 proficiency level for *standard not met* in ELA. The sixth-grade ELA scores improved in proficiency from 2022 to 2023. In 2022, the group average was 2415.89, which fell in the Level 1 proficiency range (i.e., range: 2200–2441), corresponding to *standard not met*. In 2023, the group average was 2462.78, which is an improvement to Level 2 proficiency range of *standard nearly met* (i.e., range: 2457–2530). These statistically significant changes in improvement to the next proficiency level for ELA from 1 year to the next (i.e., from fifth to sixth grade) are promising.

Math scores at all grade levels also improved significantly; however, most grade levels remained at the Level 1 (i.e., *standard not met*) proficiency level from before (i.e., 2022) to after (i.e., 2023) summer school. Only fourth-grade ELA students moved from Level 1 proficiency level for *standard not met* in 2022 ($M = 2385.87$) to Level 2 (i.e., *standard nearly met*) in 2023 ($M = 2418.11$), $t(97) = 5.63, p < .001$.

Although the scores improved for fourth-grade ELA and fifth-grade math, their proficiency levels went down from 2022 to 2023. In 2022, these groups scored in Level 2 proficiency and in 2023, their scores went down to correspond to a Level 1 proficiency. Specifically, the 2022 fourth-grade ELA score of 2367.10 corresponded to a Level 2 proficiency

(i.e., range: 2367–2431) in Grade 3, which was when they took the 2022 test. In 2023, that same group fourth-grade EL students scored a mean of 2404.17 on ELA, which corresponded to a Level 1 proficiency (i.e., range: 2140–2415). Similarly, for fifth-grade math, EL students averaged 2417.54 in 2022, which corresponded to a Level 2 proficiency (i.e., range: 2411–2484) in Grade 4, when they took the test in 2022. In 2023, those same students scored an average of 2431.67, corresponding to a Level 1 proficiency (i.e., range: 2200–2441).

Overall, it is a promising finding that scaled scores for all assessments demonstrated statistically significant growth from the previous year. This finding indicated students made academic growth over time, which was exemplified through scaled scores rather than categorical proficiency levels. Although EL students demonstrated academic growth, these preset proficiency levels can be a potential barrier to meet reclassification requirements (CDE, 2022d).

EL Summative Test Scores: Time in Summer School

The last analysis examined whether students' test scores changed based on the amount of time EL students spent in summer school. EL students had the choice between a 4-hour (i.e., academic only) block or a 9-hour (i.e., academic and enrichment) block of summer school. Table 8 compares EL students who attended summer school for the 4-hour academic block to the EL students who attended summer school for the whole 9-hour day, participating in both academic and enrichment activities. Overall, approximately twice as many EL students attended the 9-hour program ($n = 155$) compared to the 4-hour program ($n = 68$). The homogeneity of variance test (i.e., Levene's test, 1960) indicated no statistical difference for in group variance, thus indicating the t test was appropriate to run despite the different sample sizes in the two groups.

Table 8*Independent Samples t Test Comparing EL Students (4-Hour to 9-Hour Summer School)*

Grade	Dependent variables	4-hour summer school			9-hour summer school		
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Grade 4	ELA	28	2416.07	85.14	67	2395.69	84.29
	Math	28	2439.36	84.92	66	2414.45	82.56
	ELPAC	21	1527.76	48.16	55	1519.84	46.75
Grade 5	ELA	19	2443.58	86.45	49	2419.98	80.59
	Math	19	2447.63	92.37	49	2423.49	84.22
	ELPAC	15	1538.00	37.61	39	1529.49	55.64
Grade 6	ELA	21	2468.33	87.42	39	2455.67	77.14
	Math	21	2445.33	69.42	39	2446.10	95.57
	ELPAC	21	1548.53	42.81	39	1547.12	52.72

Note. 4-hour summer school, *n* = 68. 9-hour summer school, *n* = 155.

Overall, there were no statistical differences across any dependent variables based on amount of time spent in summer school. EL students who attended summer school for 4 hours had slightly higher scores in ELA, math, and ELPAC than students who attended the 9-hour program; however, these differences were not statistically significant.

ELPAC. In addition to no statistically significant differences in ELPAC scores based on time spent in summer school, the scores in Table 8 show each grade level was in the same proficiency range. Specifically, all EL students (i.e., fourth, fifth, and sixth graders) landed in Level 3 proficiency for ELPAC scores, regardless of attending a 4-hour or 9-hour block of summer school.

ELA and Math. Although there were no statistical differences for ELA or math based on time spent in summer school, ELA scores in 2023 for the 4-hour academic group were in a higher proficiency range than the 9-hour group that included academics and enrichment. The same pattern emerged for fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who attended summer school, such that those who attended 9 hours of summer school scored *at standard not met* (i.e., Level 1 proficiency range) and those who attended 4 hours of summer school scored at *standard nearly*

met (i.e., Level 2 proficiency range). To summarize, all EL students who participated in the full day of summer school (i.e., 9 hours) scored at Level 1 (i.e., *standard not met*) for ELA. In Grade 4, EL students who attended 9-hour summer school were 21 points away from the *standard nearly met* (i.e., Level 2 proficiency). In Grade 5, EL students were 23 points away, and in Grade 6, EL students were 2 points away from ELA *standards nearly met*.

For math scores, each grade scored in the same proficiency range in 2023 regardless of time spent in summer school. Grade 4, for example, remained in Level 2 proficiency (i.e., range: 2411–2484), regardless of attending 4 or 9 hours of summer school. Grade 5 EL students remained at a Level 1 proficiency for math (i.e., range: 2220–2454). Grade 6 EL students also remained in Level 1 proficiency (i.e., range: 2235–2472).

Research Question 2 Conclusion

The analysis of quantitative test scores revealed insights to address Research Question 2 regarding the extent to which attending the summer school program improved fourth to sixth-grade ELs' academic achievement (e.g., in ELA, mathematics, and ELPAC academic scores). The first independent samples *t* test compared academic scores of EL summer school students to EL students who did not attend summer school. This *t* test demonstrated there were no significant differences and both EL student groups performed in the same proficiency level, except for Grade 6 ELA scores. Grade 6 summer school students performed one level of proficiency higher than students who did not attend summer school.

The second analysis compared EL summer school student academic scores from 2022 to their 2023 academic scores in ELA, math, and ELPAC. This paired *t* test showed for EL students who attended summer school, their ELA, math, and ELPAC scores significantly increased from

1 year to the next, although their proficiency level varied. There were pockets of growth for fourth-grade students' ELPAC scores and sixth-gradestudents' ELA scores. For fourth-grade ELA and fifth-grademath, students' proficiency levels went down one proficiency level. However, the statistically significant increase in all three assessments demonstrated students made academic growth from year to year.

The third *t* test compared the academic scores of EL students who attended summer school for 4 hours to EL students who attended for 9 hours and indicated no statistical differences based on time in summer school. The 4-hour summer school group, which consisted of academics only, descriptively scored at a higher proficiency level in ELA, math, and ELPAC for Grades 4 and 5. In sixth grade, the comparisons were very close for 4- and 9-hour summer school. Although Winship et al. (2005) recommended a 9-hour, 8-week summer program to increase academic achievement outcomes, students in this study who completed a 9-hour, 4-week program did not experience increased academic state summative scores compared to EL students who attended for 4 hours. That said, there are additional benefits to attending summer school not captured solely by test score data using categorical proficiency levels. Academic growth in scaled scores demonstrated students continued to improve their academic skills.

Conclusion

According to qualitative interview results, the school district used multiple culturally responsive strategies to plan and implement a 20-day summer school using ELOP funding. The school district leveraged equity-minded decisions by using multiple data points in the organization. The POSA's ability to reflect on leadership behaviors led to the collaboration and coordination of the leadership team to build capacity of culturally responsive teachers and direct

the SOLs work in summer school registration. This system of support in the school district sought to create an accessible summer school program for all elementary school students to support their needs in academics and SEL after engaging in distance learning.

This mixed-method study provided evidence that the school district provided supports for students and families through the summer school program. Parents had the flexibility of registering their child for either an academic morning program or a longer day including enrichment activities, depending on their childcare needs. SOLs were able to help overcome summer school registration barriers to increase summer school participation. For upper grade elementary students, SOLs reported students enjoyed summer school because they were able to be with friends and do different enrichment activities. Teachers also reported implementing SEL lessons daily helped promote academic risk taking during academic time.

The quantitative results showed EL students who attended summer school did not differ from EL students in the district who did not attend summer school. However, for those EL students who attended summer school, their scores in ELA, math, and ELPAC significantly improved from 2022 to 2023, although their proficiency levels largely remained the same. These findings are promising. Taken together, the findings from this mixed-method study highlighted the need for more data when evaluating educational programs and interventions related to student academic outcomes.

Using only quantitative data does not account for research-based best practices in which the school district should continue to invest, such as culturally responsive and socioemotional learning approaches. This is not to suggest quantitative data are not valuable, only that these data should constitute as one of many data points needed to evaluate educational programs and

interventions such as summer school. As shared in the interview data, EL summer school students enjoyed enrichment activities, making friends, and had the opportunity to continue to connect with teachers. Overall, EL students who attended summer school benefited from the program, as evident in their state summative academic scores and the qualitative experiences described by the educators.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This mixed-method study investigated a summer school program offered in one Southern California school district, focusing on English learners (EL) students in Grades 4–6. This school district used its Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP) funding after the COVID-19 global pandemic to amplify its summer school program in 2022, which was different from previous years in the district (State of California Department of Finance, 2022a). To understand more about this 2022 summer school program offered in the district, and the potential impact it had on EL students in Grades 4–6, this study provided findings from interviews with district employees who were summer school leaders and staff and applied the culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework (Khalifa et al., 2016) to interpret the findings.

The CRSL framework provided a priori codes that were applied to analyze the qualitative interviews to explore the culturally responsive practices in the planning and implementation of the summer school program. A rich description of the summer school program emerged from the interviews and was triangulated with a publicly available board presentation given in Fall 2022, after the summer program, by the director of teaching and learning. The presentation provided an annual update about the impact of summer school and referenced focus groups the district conducted with parents and students about their experiences.

To further examine the impact of the summer school program on students, quantitative academic student data were obtained from the district for EL students in Grade 4–6. This snapshot of test scores allowed for a comparison of the academic outcomes in English language arts (ELA), math, and English language assessment from California (ELPAC) for EL students

who attended summer school compared to EL students who did not attend summer school.

Analyses also provided insight about EL students who attended summer school to show whether test scores changed from before to after summer school or based on time spent in summer school.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings and highlights the implications of the research, aligning with the research questions. There were two research questions:

1. What are the components of a culturally responsive summer school program, offered to the entire elementary school population in a school district? What was the overall intent, the components, and the instructional quality of the program?
2. Does attending this summer school program improve fourth to sixth-grade ELs' academic achievement (e.g., in English language arts, mathematics, and English proficiency summative academic scores) compared to EL students who did not attend this summer school program?
 - a. Does the amount of time spent in the summer school program improve academic outcomes for fourth to sixth-grade EL students?

Overall, this mixed-method study provided a review of the district's attempt to support students via a summer school program that was intentionally designed and implemented through a culturally responsive approach. One key element of this approach was embedding socioemotional learning opportunities into the summer school program. Test score data revealed significant differences for EL students who attended summer school; however, these students' test scores did not significantly differ from EL students in the district. The data provided insight and initiated the conversation about academic achievement for EL students. Qualitative data

indicated teachers found the summer school program beneficial for students and their families, and they enjoyed the experience of working with students, especially for those who would continue to be their students the following academic year.

Discussion of Findings

Overall, this summer school program had strong leadership and planning, intentional outreach to families, accessibility to families via provided transportation, and effective teaching and intentional curriculum—all demonstrating a great example of the CRSL approach (Khalifa et al., 2016). Primarily, the school district highlighted CRSL in the planning and implementation of the summer school program through equity-minded decision making. The principal on special assignment (POSA) demonstrated evidence of using school data in how summer school was implemented in past years and how it would need to change to meet the vision of the summer school program using ELOP funding. Unlike Khalifa et al. (2016), who referred to using school data and referencing equity audits, the POSA used multiple data points to make equity-minded decisions. The data points that guided the planning and implementation of summer school were

- ELOP funding requirements;
- the context of students returning to in person instruction from the pandemic;
- teacher, student, and parent focus groups; and
- more traditional data points such as student academic achievement scores.

The way the POSA was able to prioritize all the data to best meet the needs of students and families demonstrates how well she embodied behaviors of the first component of CRSL. Her critical reflection of leadership behaviors ensured parent and student voices were represented in the implementation of summer school (Brown, 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2023). For example,

parents felt their children did not get the experience of making friends during distance learning so the district created summer school curriculum not only focused on academics such as ELA and math but also social emotional learning (SEL) so teacher and students could engage in positive peer relationship and community building as part of their daily routine.

In addition to the leadership, creating summer school curriculum using culturally relevant and high-interest novels, hands-on experiences in math, and SEL activities also highlighted the second component of CRSL. Giving teachers the summer school curriculum demonstrated how the school district was developing culturally responsive teachers. Teacher interviews demonstrated how teachers used the curriculum and how it benefited themselves and their students' learning. According to Cruz et al. (2020), teachers are more confident implementing culturally responsive teaching around understanding student preferences, building personal relationships with students, and building trust. Teachers are less confident in specific cultural knowledge and building home-to-school connections. It was evident in the interviews that teacher did SEL with their summer school students and they were able to create a safe learning environment for their students to learn.

Hammond (2015) supported creating a safe environment as the foundation of what the brain needs to learn. When students feel unsafe, it is difficult for learning to happen. This is especially true for EL students, according to Soland and Sandilos (2021) who noted SEL and building trust helps student self-efficacy in academics. The focus of SEL as planned by the district and implemented by the teacher created a safe environment for students to learn, which can lead to improved academic scores. There was evidence of students recalling fractions

strategies from summer school and feeling more confident about doing math. This example further demonstrates how culturally responsive practices support student learning.

Teachers also benefited from the district-created curriculum. During the interview, one teacher noted it was his first time reading the novel study selection. He mentioned how engaged students were reading the story and how he also enjoyed it. This experience may encourage this teacher to select additional book selections that are culturally relevant for his students during the school year and to get the same type of student engagement. According to Gay (2002), it is important for teachers to know the cultural contributions of their students' ethnic background, and teachers who select books by Black, Indigenous, people of color authors can play a powerful role in culturally responsive teaching. Reading books that mirror student cultural heritage is one way to support teachers in building specific cultural knowledge and engage in rich culturally responsive teaching for students. In this regard, summer school is also an opportunity for teachers to receive professional development (Augustine et al., 2016).

The last two components of CRSL are promoting culturally responsive school environments and engaging in the student and parent context. These two components are highlighted in the work of how teachers and school outreach liaisons (SOLs) worked together at the direction of the district. It is important to note this position requires SOLs to be bilingual and to not only translate but also outreach to the community (Lowenhaupt, 2014). Because summer school registration began early, SOLs were able to reach out to families and work with teachers to during parent conference week to actively recruit special populations of students who would benefit from summer school. SOLs also received feedback from parents in the fall that their children enjoyed the program in continuing to help families feel connected to school. López et al.

(2013) stated parental involvement is essential to the success of their students due to strong family bonds in the Latino community, for example. It is vital to support parents and students together to maximize the impact of student supports.

In addition to the design and implementation of the summer school program, academic scores for EL students were examined. Although EL summer school students did not score significantly higher than EL students who did not attend summer school, there were pockets of academic improvement from specific groups of summer school students. For example, fourth-grade EL students who attended summer school increased one proficiency level from the previous year in ELPAC scores. Also, sixth-grade ELA scores also increased one proficiency level from the previous year. Additionally, for those EL students who attended summer school, their test scores significantly improved from the year prior (i.e., 2022) to the year after (i.e., 2023) summer school. Although proficiency levels largely remained the same across grade levels and tests, there were some pockets of growth in students' fourth-grade ELPAC and sixth-grade ELA proficiency levels, and some pockets of students with a decreased proficiency level in fourth-grade ELA and fifth-grade math. Although many variables contribute to test scores (Cooper et al., 2010; Elish et al., 2022; Gottfried, 2009, 2010; Roby, 2004), and threats to validity are likely for analyses looking at change over time (e.g., history, testing, maturation effects), the significant improvement in mean scores provided promising initial findings. Yet, more research is needed to determine how best to assist students in improving to the next proficiency level, especially considering the classification system relies on proficiency levels (CDE, 2022d).

Additionally, all California school districts saw flat test scores overall after the COVID-19 global pandemic (Fensterwald & Willis, 2023). Investigators have pointed to multiple contributing factors. For example, during the COVID-19 global pandemic, the number of low-income students rose from 60% to 63% and the number of homeless students who completed assessment tests rose from 2,000 to 94,000. School districts (Fensterwald & Willis, 2023). also reported record high numbers of staff shortages and student absences. The CDE (2023a) also reported, in 2022, the state average for chronic absenteeism peaked, doubling the percentage from 2019 at 12.1%. Unfortunately, the chronic absenteeism of vulnerable populations has remained disproportionately high. For example, the rate for ELs with chronic absenteeism was at 28.1% statewide in 2023 (CDE, 2023a). With this context in mind, the role of providing summer school becomes increasingly important for EL students.

Summative state scores are an important data point for addressing academic instruction for students but should not be the only indicator of success. According to Hill (2020), it can take years to address learning loss. The culturally responsive practices of leaders, teachers, and SOLs should not be discounted because of a snapshot of short-term summative state test scores using categorical proficiency levels. Using scaled scores to track academic growth demonstrated more promising results, indicating students, teachers, and school systems are moving in the right direction toward meeting the academic needs of EL students.

Additionally, summer school should not be the only support school districts provide students and families. As this mixed-method study demonstrated, the school district was actively addressing learning loss through accelerated learning in summer school. There was evidence that the parents, students, and teachers found the summer program beneficial to student learning. For

example, parents reported to SOLs that their children enjoyed the summer program. Students enjoyed the ability to spend more time with their friends over the summer and teachers noticed students actively engaged in learning and were comfortable to take academic risks. Teachers further indicated the benefit of having some summer school students in their classes the following academic year, providing more time together to build relationships. Taken together, summer school is an example of how a school district can provide support, especially for EL students.

Limitations

According to Hill (2020), addressing learning loss can take several years. Due to the timeframe of this study, academic student data were used only a year after the COVID-19 global pandemic, thus, more time may be needed to fully understand the picture of academic achievement. To ensure reliability and validity of academic scores, summative state tests were used and not local assessments. Using state summative tests meant students were assessed at least 6 months after summer school ended, which was when the summative state testing window began.

Many factors, especially time between summer school and testing, can contribute to test scores. If norm-referenced ELA, math, and language proficiency tests were available at the beginning of the school year, results may have provided a stronger indicator of the specific impact of summer school instruction on student achievement. Also, because this was a voluntary summer school program, the number of students who did not go to summer school was larger than students who attended summer school. To that end, mean scores (i.e., averages) were used to draw comparisons but do not provide the full picture.

Although the qualitative interviews intentionally selected summer school staff, it was unknown if SOLs were working with bilingual or EL families because the role of the SOL is to outreach to all families. However, all SOLs were working at different Title I schools for summer school registration with a majority of the district's unduplicated students (i.e., EL, low income, and foster youth). To that end, the SOL experience captured in this study is representative of working at a Title I school with a majority Spanish-speaking, EL student population in the district. All district employees were tasked with serving all students, although this study had a specific lens for EL students and families.

Future Research

Given the findings and limitations of this study, there are multiple opportunities for future research. First, it may be beneficial to do a long-term longitudinal quantitative study that follows EL students who participate in summer school every year to explore the cumulative effects of summer school compared to EL students who do not go summer school. It may also be beneficial to expand the sample size of this study by adding multiple school districts that provide summer school to all elementary school students for the same number of weeks of instruction and hours of instruction per day.

Given the focus on SEL instruction during this summer school program, future research might add assessments for SEL. School districts may benefit also from diversifying data on SEL. For example, research by West et al. (2018) examined the California CORE districts, a collaboration of eight districts who were granted a *No Child Left Behind* (2001) waiver from 2013–2016 by publicly reporting on academic and nonacademic indicators and collaborated on best practices and assessed SEL using student self-reports. The findings from West et al.'s

(2018) study indicated social emotional skills had a strong, statistically significant correlation to academic outcomes (i.e., grade point average, ELA, and math scores) and behavioral outcomes (i.e., suspension and absence rates). Therefore, expanding the dependent variable to include attendance, suspension rates, and other behavioral metrics may help account for the positive benefits of summer school learning.

Teachers play a pivotal role in the academic success of EL students to graduate high school (Clark-Gareca et al., 2020). This study's results indicated strong teaching is happening in support of EL students and future research should focus on exemplary teachers who use effective, culturally responsive, academic strategies for EL students. Such research would further identify asset-based academic data points for EL students and provide insight about EL students' strengths and challenges. Summer school teachers also recommended more professional development and highlighting best practices, which can lead to better academic support for EL students (Bunch, 2013). Thus, focusing on teachers in future research is warranted.

Additionally, future research should include various assessments to measure EL students' academic achievement. Based on the publicly available board presentation and positive review of teachers regarding EL students' academic writing, future studies might specifically examine EL students' strengths and challenges with writing, along with specific effective teaching practices to support writing improvement. The use of local assessments, specifically for writing, can lead to rich data to help EL students improve their writing. It was also evident in the qualitative findings that teachers were encouraged to use formative assessments to refine district provided curriculum and instruction. Research evidence has supported the role of formative assessments in

supporting EL students (Alvarez et al., 2014). More teacher interviews with the focus on role of formative assessment in EL instruction can highlight best practices.

With the rise of chronic absenteeism after the COVID-19 global pandemic (Fensterwald & Willis, 2023), it may also be beneficial to research whether summer school bridges the gap for chronically absent EL elementary school students. As this current study demonstrated, a mixed-method approach would best highlight the successes and challenges of chronically absent EL students.

Implications

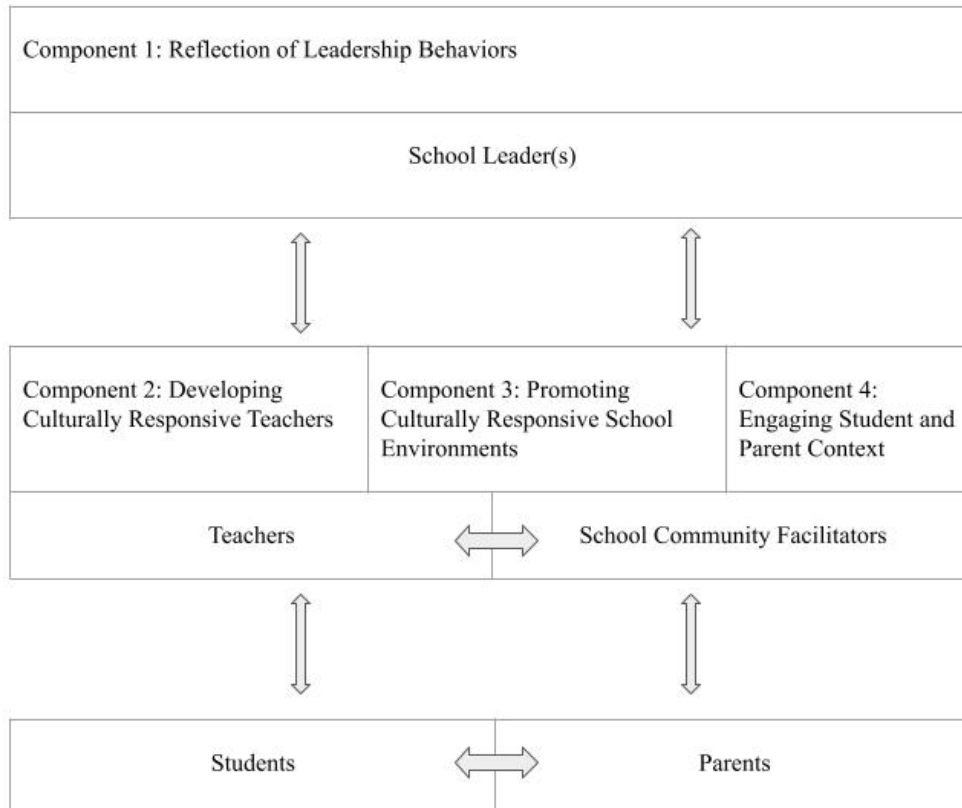
The findings from this current study have several implications that are relevant to the academic, political, and school context.

Theoretical Implications

The way CRSL equity-minded decision making was implemented for summer school can be visualized through Figure 1.

Figure 1

CRSL Equity-Minded Decision Making



The first component of CRSL is the responsibility of the school leader with the use of multiple data points from teachers, SOLs, students, and parents (Gay & Kirkland, 2023). For example, the POSA in this current study used student, parent, and teacher focus groups data to guide the planning and implementation of the summer school program. Given other more traditional school data (e.g., academic scores) were also taken into consideration, the district created curriculum with a focus on SEL and robust, hands-on programming. When they leverage these data points into equity-minded decision making, Components 2–4 are affected on a continuum. For example, the district-created summer school curriculum helped develop culturally responsive teachers through the implementation of SEL and high-interest culturally

responsive novel studies (Gay, 2002). Through summer-school teacher placement, some teachers and students were able to work together year-round promoting culturally responsive school environment (Madhlangobe, 2009).

Collaboration with SOLs to strategize a registration plan not only supported parents and students through registration but also helped parents feel more connected to the school. Through the interviews, it was evident teachers and SOL had different capacities for culturally responsive practices. However, given the POSA's equity-minded decisions, teachers and SOL were part of a system whose work supported each other. This contributes to the capacity building of teachers and SOL to incorporate more culturally sustaining practices into their work (Paris & Alim, 2017). In this system, there is ongoing collaboration and feedback with different groups in the system that contribute to school leader decision making. These decisions affected how students and parents interact and engage with school in a supportive and caring manner (Lowenhaupt, 2014).

Figure 1 served as a conceptual framework for how CRSL was evident in the planning and implementation of the summer school program in this study. It serves as an important reminder of the critical role of parents as partners in supporting students in the school environment (López et al., 2013; Paris & Alim, 2017). This is especially true for parents of EL students. As demonstrated in this study, EL parents face many barriers to accessing information, resources, and opportunities at school. The role of SOL was important for Spanish dominant families to overcome barriers to summer school registration. This framework also serves a reminder that students are just a part of the system. Often in prevalent deficit-thinking models about students and families, stagnant academic achievement has resulted in an over emphasis on

academic intervention that does not engage or align with research on effective instructional practices (Umansky & Dumont, 2021). It is more important for school districts to create functioning school systems that build capacity of teachers, SOLs, students, and parents for the benefit of the whole school community.

Implications for Practice

Given the findings and limitations of this study, there are multiple opportunities for this school district to continue to support EL students in Grades 4–6. First, continuing to invest in SEL practices both district-wide and year-round will foster an asset-based approach to learning. Research has demonstrated how EL students perform better when they have positive self-efficacy (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). Because the district already had a leadership team who were able to create summer school curriculum, they could analyze academic needs of elementary students by grade level to create curriculum tailored to the needs of each grade level. One teacher noted in the interviews that they needed more time for small group instruction. It might be helpful to build in guided reading time during summer school so teachers can do small group instruction. Based on how many EL students attended summer school, it might also be beneficial for EL students in Level 1 and 2 proficiency ranges to receive designated English language development instruction for part of their summer school day.

There are two foci for other school districts to consider from this study. First, school districts should ensure SEL is part of their elementary summer school program. SEL is an effective way to build classroom community and elicit student engagement through sharing about themselves and actively listening to others. Second, other districts should consider creating an SOL position if it does not already exist. The important work of SOLs in this study

highlighted the value of connecting students and families to the school. School connectedness between families and their school increases student achievement (López et al., 2013).

Lastly, knowing test scores were flat for EL students who are at risk of becoming long-term English learners (LTELs), it is important that the school district continue to support the academic needs of these students and align culturally responsive practices during summer school and throughout the school year. Although schools had resumed in-person instruction at the time of this study, it is important to capitalize on additional funding to continue to meet the needs of students and families. This is an opportunity to reimagine schools to better address educational inequity.

Policy Implications

Considering the limitations of this study, it would be important for ELOP funding to remain the same or increase for the next 5–7 years and to do a longitudinal study on the kindergarten cohort of this study. A longitudinal study would better assess the impact of offering a 9-hour summer school to elementary students. California state leaders may also consider ensuring SEL is a program requirement because evidence has shown SEL creates a safe learning environment during summer school.

California state leaders should also continue to build capacity to increase the bilingual teacher pipeline to better serve EL students (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Leonard et al., 2020; López et al., 2013). In the process of building bilingual teacher capacity, it may also be time to use multiple data points to determine if the reclassification criteria for students to exit the EL program are still appropriate. Betts et al. (2019) recommended districts monitor appropriate reclassification criteria so students reclassify when they are ready. As this current study

highlighted, EL students have made statistically significant academic growth in state summative tests in ELA, math, and ELPAC. Given these findings, it may be beneficial for California state leaders to critically analyze the role of categorical proficiency levels in the reclassification process as these categorical assessments do not provide a full picture of student growth. Categorical data artificially impose cut-offs to scaled data, limiting educators' understanding of student growth. With statewide proficiency levels remaining flat across the state of California (Fensterwald & Willis, 2023), it may be time to consider other metrics in the assessment of EL students.

Estrada and Wang (2018) warned that prolonged EL status can lead to students becoming LTELs, which has negative consequences for EL students. For example, Thompson (2017) found students who do not reclassify by Year 6 were less likely to reclassify out of the program. With the limited research-based recommendation for LTELs (Artigliere, 2019), there is a need for California state leaders to study this subgroup of students. They are overrepresented in special education (Kim, 2017; Kim & Garcia, 2014) and more research is needed to warrant to determine if special education is an appropriate program to meet their specific academic needs.

Additionally, investment in ongoing teacher training is also needed to build capacity of bilingual educators (Bunch, 2013; Nieto, 2017). Investment in ELOP and other state funding that aims to better support students should also set aside funding to train teachers especially when it comes to EL students. With the number of EL students in the state of California, all student facing educators should be supported in ongoing professional development to address EL students' academic, social, and emotional needs.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 global pandemic forced educational systems to address educational inequity in unprecedented ways. In the state of California, deep financial investments were made to address pandemic learning loss through accelerated learning and whole child supports. ELOP funding was used to give students more instructional days through summer school. Many school districts took ELOP funding to provide additional supports for students. It is important to evaluate how school districts are using their funding to ensure they support vulnerable student populations such as ELs.

The COVID-19 global pandemic was especially challenging for ELs. The lack of in-person instruction and use of distance learning created many barriers to instruction for EL students (Lavadenz et al., 2021). Upper grade elementary EL students are at risk of becoming LTELs and staying in the program for 6 years or longer (CDE, 2022b). It is especially important for school district to provide supports for these students to reduce the number of LTELs and increase the number of students who meet academic grade-level standards to address equity (Californians Together, 2022). This is especially challenging as students return to school and have greater academic, social, and emotional needs (Fensterwald & Willis, 2023).

School districts are in a position to reinvent an educational system that better meets the needs of students. With more sources of funding, summer school is one of many supports that can help EL students meet grade level standards. Although EL students in this study maintained lower proficiency levels across ELA, math, and ELPAC, the culturally responsive practices used by the school district was promising as they will continue to support students and families in the years to come. As school districts support students through this unprecedented time after the

COVID-19 global pandemic, studies like these can help highlight practices that may be beneficial to other school districts who support a similar demographic of students to help promote best practices. Overall, such studies provide a sense of accountability that can be replicated across the state of California to hold school districts to their responsibility of supporting vulnerable student populations.

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Teachers

Interview Information	
Date:	Time:
Interviewer:	Interviewee (pseudonym):
Location:	

1. INTRODUCTION	NOTES
<p>Hello, my name is Laurie Virtusio. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my dissertation project. This project is about the summer school program offered in the district at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.</p> <p>The purpose of my research is to document the summer school program offering to highlight the components, instruction and training, and overall intention of the program.</p> <p>During the interview, I'll ask you to tell me about your experiences with the 2022 summer school program. These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, please just tell me that you do not want to answer and we will move on to the next question.</p> <p>I anticipate the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With your permission, I will record video and audio via Zoom so that I can transcribe the conversation and use the transcript for analysis. <i>[IF PARTICIPANT DOES NOT AGREE TO BE RECORDED, YOU CAN CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW JUST TAKING NOTES OR YOU CAN CHOOSE TO DISCONTINUE INTERVIEW.]</i></p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin?</p>	

<p><i>[ANSWER QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. IF YOU CAN'T ANSWER OFF HAND, ASK IF THEY'D BE COMFORTABLE WITH YOU GETTING BACK TO THEM WITH THE ANSWER AFTER THE INTERVIEW]</i></p>	
<p>2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</p>	<p>NOTES</p>
<p>Opening To begin, I am going to ask a few background questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your job position with the district and how long have you been in your current position? How long have you worked in education? 2. Are you bilingual? What languages do you speak? 3. For the purpose of describing the sample, can you share a bit about your identity (gender, ethnicity, etc.) 4. How did you get involved with the 2022 summer program? <p>Content For the remainder of the interview, we are going to focus on your experience with the summer school program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was your role and responsibilities for the 2022 summer school program? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. [Prompt] By that I mean, what was your job assignment and what did that entail? 2. Can you tell me more about the training you received to prepare for the summer program? 3. What was the typical student schedule like? What did the academic block entail? 4. What did the enrichment block entail? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. [Probe] Can you tell me more about X, Y, Z? 	

<p>5. What was instruction like during the summer program and how was it different than the regular school year?</p> <p>6. What were the benefits of being part of the summer program?</p>	
<p>3. CLOSING</p>	
<p>We need to start wrapping up our interview now, but before we do, is there anything you would like to add that I didn't ask?</p> <p>[STOP RECORDING.]</p> <p>Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis. Is it ok if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?</p> <p>[BE SURE TO MAKE A NOTE OF THEIR ANSWER.]</p> <p>Thanks again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.</p>	

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Administrator

Interview Information	
Date:	Time:
Interviewer:	Interviewee (pseudonym):
Location:	

INTRODUCTION	NOTES
<p>Hello, my name is Laurie Virtusio. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my dissertation project. This project is about the summer school program offered in the district at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.</p> <p>The purpose of my research is to document the summer school program offering to highlight the components, instruction and training, and overall intention of the program.</p> <p>During the interview, I'll ask you to tell me about your experiences with the 2022 summer school program. These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, please just tell me that you do not want to answer and we will move on to the next question.</p> <p>I anticipate the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With your permission, I will record video and audio via Zoom so that I can transcribe the conversation and use the transcript for analysis. <i>[IF PARTICIPANT DOES NOT AGREE TO BE RECORDED, YOU CAN CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW JUST TAKING NOTES OR YOU CAN CHOOSE TO DISCONTINUE INTERVIEW.]</i></p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin?</p>	

<p><i>[ANSWER QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. IF YOU CAN'T ANSWER OFF HAND, ASK IF THEY'D BE COMFORTABLE WITH YOU GETTING BACK TO THEM WITH THE ANSWER AFTER THE INTERVIEW]</i></p>	
<p>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</p>	<p>NOTES</p>
<p>Opening To begin, I am going to ask a few background questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your job position with the district and how long have you been in your current position? How long have you worked in education? 2. Are you bilingual? What languages do you speak? 3. For the purpose of describing the sample, can you share a bit about your identity (gender, ethnicity, etc.) 4. How did you get involved with the 2022 summer program? <p>Content For the remainder of the interview, we are going to focus on your experience with the summer school program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was your role and responsibilities for the 2022 summer school program? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. [Prompt] By that I mean, what was your job assignment and what did that entail? 2. In your view, what was the overall intention for offering the summer school program? 3. Can you tell me about the planning for summer school? How was it different from the previous year? 4. How was it advertised to parents? 5. Was there a specific investment in supporting EL students in this program? If so, how? 6. How was the summer program evaluated? 	

CLOSING	
<p>We need to start wrapping up our interview now, but before we do, is there anything you would like to add that I didn't ask?</p> <p>[STOP RECORDING.]</p> <p>Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis. Is it ok if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?</p> <p>[BE SURE TO MAKE A NOTE OF THEIR ANSWER.]</p> <p>Thanks again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.</p>	

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol for School Outreach Liaisons

Interview Information	
Date:	Time:
Interviewer:	Interviewee (pseudonym):
Location:	

INTRODUCTION	NOTES
<p>Hello, my name is Laurie Virtusio. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my dissertation project. This project is about the summer school program offered in the district at the end of the 2021-2022 school year.</p> <p>The purpose of my research is to document the summer school program offering to highlight the components, instruction and training, and overall intention of the program.</p> <p>During the interview, I'll ask you to tell me about your experiences with the 2022 summer school program. These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, please just tell me that you do not want to answer and we will move on to the next question.</p> <p>I anticipate the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With your permission, I will record video and audio via Zoom so that I can transcribe the conversation and use the transcript for analysis. <i>[IF PARTICIPANT DOES NOT AGREE TO BE RECORDED, YOU CAN CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW JUST TAKING NOTES OR YOU CAN CHOOSE TO DISCONTINUE INTERVIEW.]</i></p> <p>Do you have any questions before we begin? <i>[ANSWER QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. IF YOU CAN'T ANSWER OFF HAND, ASK IF THEY'D BE COMFORTABLE WITH YOU GETTING BACK TO THEM WITH THE ANSWER AFTER THE INTERVIEW]</i></p>	
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	NOTES
<p>Opening</p> <p>To begin, I am going to ask a few background questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your job position with the district and how long have you been in your current position? How long have you worked in education? 	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Are you bilingual? What languages do you speak? 3. For the purpose of describing the sample, can you share a bit about your identity (gender, ethnicity, etc.) 4. How did you get involved with the 2022 summer program? <p>Content For the remainder of the interview, we are going to focus on your experience with the summer school program.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was your role and responsibilities for the 2022 summer school program? 2. [Prompt] By that I mean, what was your job assignment and what did that entail? 3. In your view, what made families interested in the summer school program? 4. What did you notice about families choosing to attend summer school? 5. Did you notice anything about families choosing the 3, 6, or 9 hour option? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Why do you think some families opted for the 3hr block vs. 6- or 9-hour block? b. [Probes] Did employment have an impact? As in parents working full-time? c. Did student achievement level have an impact? As in they needed more time? 6. What were some challenges for families registering for summer school? 7. Do you have suggestions for increasing the number of families that sign up for summer school? 8. Did you get any feedback from families about the summer program? What did they share? 	
<p>CLOSING</p>	
<p>We need to start wrapping up our interview now, but before we do, is there anything you would like to add that I didn't ask? [STOP RECORDING.] Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis. Is it ok if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?</p> <p>[BE SURE TO MAKE A NOTE OF THEIR ANSWER.]</p> <p>Thanks again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.</p>	

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